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# **The Attitudes of Political Parties in Serbia and Croatia towards the European Union in Comparative Perspective**

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## List of abbreviations

DOS	Democratic Opposition of Serbia
DS	Democratic Party (Serbia)
DSS	Democratic Party of Serbia
EC	European Community
ELDR	European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
EU	European Union
HDSSB	Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonija and Baranja
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union
HNS	Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats
HSS	Croatian Peasants' Party
HSP	Croatian Party of Rights
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party (Serbia)
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of Parliament
NS	New Serbia
PES	Party of European Socialists
SAA	Stabilisation and Association Agreement
SAP	Stabilisation and Association Process
SDP	Social Democratic Party of Croatia
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SNS	Serbian Progressive Party
SPS	Socialist Party of Serbia
SRS	Serbian Radical Party

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**UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX****MARKO STOJIĆ****THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY****THE ATTITUDES OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN SERBIA AND CROATIA  
TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN UNION IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE****SUMMARY**

The thesis examines how parties in Serbia and Croatia have responded to the significant challenges brought by European integration since 2000. It seeks to identify and categorise the broad, underlying stances on the substance of the European integration as expressed by relevant, parliamentary parties across both countries. The thesis also intends to discern the most important factors that determined the formation of their attitudes. It explores the interaction and effects of five explanatory variables: party ideology, party strategy, position within the party system, relations with electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups, and transnational and bilateral party linkages. As a qualitative comparative study, it draws on a qualitative content analysis of party programmatic documents as well as interviews with senior party officials, country experts and officials of the EU and European transnational parties. The thesis makes a major empirical contribution to our knowledge on party responses to Europe by looking systematically and comparatively at two under-researched cases. It also makes a more general theoretical contribution by using a new set of cases to test, amend and develop the literature on party positions on the EU.

The thesis found that party ideology and strategy were the most important drivers of parties' attitudes towards the EU. Although Serbian and Croatian parties had generally loose ideological underpinnings, a party's ideology was the single most important source of motivation for a response to Europe in the majority of these parties. This was due to the nature of European issues, closely related to identity and statehood issues, in the context of these post-communist and post-conflict societies. Additionally, due to the specific conditions pertaining to the political milieu of candidate countries, a number of former nationalist and Eurosceptic parties fundamentally shifted their long-term positions on the EU. This volte-face was a strategically driven response to internal and external incentives in the context of dynamic electoral competition and strong EU presence, and aimed at maximising their chances of securing executive office. Other factors generally proved to be of secondary importance since their effect was mostly mediated through party ideology and strategy.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*I could not care less about them, I only respect them. I do not love them and they are not particularly dear to me, but we, as responsible people, have to take care of our nation. We need a rational, realistic and serious approach to state policy so that we gain the most we can for our country, and give away the least of what we have to lose.* (Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Serbian Progressive Party talking about the European Union (EU) and Europeans; see SNS 2010a)

### 1.1 Setting the scene

Aleksandar Vučić once staunchly supported the idea of a ‘Greater Serbia’ and served as a senior official in the Serbian Radical Party, a party known for its pronounced radical right and anti-European ideology. Later, however, Vučić shifted his political stance, ultimately leading the Serbian Progressive Party and supporting Serbian EU accession. His quote above illustrates well the attitudes of some core Serbian parties and their leaderships towards the EU. On one hand, these parties harboured deep ill feelings and grudges towards Europeans and the EU, while on the other, they gradually became cognisant of the pragmatic political need to adapt to the disliked yet ever-present European Union. Having been torn between Eurosceptic, often anti-European, ideological convictions and strategic electoral incentives to pragmatically respond to the significant challenges of European integration, these parties underwent a rapid, Damascene conversion rarely seen in contemporary European party systems. It has been recognised in the comparative literature that parties may fundamentally change, though rarely, ideologies and underlying stances on the substance of the European integration (such as the British Labour Party the 1980s and the Greek PASOK in the 1990s). Yet there is very little known about why some mainstream Serbian and Croatian parties have fundamentally shifted positions on the EU, while others remained consistently pro- or anti-European in spite of contradictory and often dramatic relations with the EU and very dynamic domestic party politics. This is somewhat surprising given the surge of studies on party positions on the EU in Central and Eastern European countries since 2000 (Taggart and Szczesbiak 2001, 2002; Batory 2002, 2008ba, 2008b; Henderson 2008; Haughton and Rybář 2009). In other words, the comparative literature, with few notable exceptions (Fisher 2006; Haughton and Fisher 2008; Konitzer 2011; Vachudova 2012), mostly ignored these ‘difficult’ cases from the European periphery, particularly the Serbian one.

On the other hand, despite the growing academic interest in how parties in general determine positions on the EU (Sitter 2001, 2002; Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Marks at al. 2002, 2006; Rovny 2004; Steenbergen at al. 2007; Sitter and Batory 2008; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, 2008b), there remain a number of controversies about the driving forces behind party responses to Europe. As we shall see in this thesis, there has been a long debate over the factors that cause parties' stances on this issue, with some form of party ideology and strategy being the most common 'suspects'. In addition, although well recognised in the existing literature as an important external factor (Pridham 2002, 2008; Vachudova 2006, 2008; Sedelmeier 2011), the depth of the EU's impact on party politics and particularly party stances on the EU, as well as the reach of its transformative power (Grabbe 2003, 2006) also remain a contested issue.

As a result, this thesis aims to bring into academic debate the peculiar and under-researched cases of Serbian and Croatian parties, and move forward the scholarly debate on the key determinants of party responses to Europe. It does so by conducting an in-depth qualitative study of how parties in these former Yugoslav republics adopted and shifted positions on the EU between 2000 and 2012. The thesis aims to identify and categorise the broad, underlying stances on 'the substance of the European integration project' (Szczerbiak 2008, p.225) as expressed by relevant, parliamentary parties across both countries. It also intends to discern the most important factors that determined the formation of their attitudes. Therefore, the central research question it addresses is: *Why and how did political parties in Serbia and Croatia adopt or change their positions on the substance of the European integration?*

To answer this question, the thesis draws on five explanatory variables that may have influenced party positions, derived from the comparative theoretical literature. These are: i) party ideology and identity; ii) party strategy and tactics; iii) position within the party system; iv) party relations with electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups and v) transnational and bilateral party linkages. It examines the individual impact of these independent variables as well as how they interact to exert influence on the dependent variable – that is, underlying party stances on the EU. The study employs a comparative method, which has rarely been used in the analysis of Central and Eastern European parties (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001, 2002; Kopecký and Mudde 2002). This approach allows us to draw more general conclusions about the impacts of European integration on national party politics. The thesis therefore hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the

dynamics of the domestic politics of European integration in different national settings as well as how contemporary political parties in Europe form and alter their attitudes towards the EU. In other words, it aims to test the existing comparative literature on party responses to Europe by looking at the empirically rich, yet arguably neglected, cases of the two former Yugoslav republics as well as to make a more general theoretical contribution.

There are two principal reasons for the case selection. First, these countries represent a very good ground for testing existing theoretical propositions, given that they are two empirically peculiar and ‘difficult’ cases. This is primarily due to the violent breakup of the former Yugoslavia, widespread Eurosceptic sentiments among both the public and considerable segments of political elites, postponed social and economic transitions and delayed integration into the EU, all of which provided rather unique settings for the formation of party positions on Europe. Second, party positions on the EU in Serbia and Croatia have been very rarely examined in the existing literature, as outlined above. This dissertation is thus one of the few comparative studies of political parties and their stances on the EU in these countries. To the best knowledge of the author, this is the first study of this issue in the format and scope of a PhD thesis, and certainly the only one dealing with the interaction of five explanatory variables in an attempt to account for these parties’ attitudes towards the EU.

The thesis starts from the presumption that it is important to know how political parties adopt and alter stances, since they are the key social actors that have a major role in shaping the strategic direction of modern states. This is the result of the functions usually associated with them, such as structuring the popular vote, integrating and mobilising the mass citizenry, aggregating diverse interests, recruiting leaders for public office and formulating public policy (Mair 1990). Moreover, political parties mobilise sentiment, structure the competition over European issues and exercise the key role in determining the shape and content of politics at the domestic level (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2008). In those Central and Eastern European countries with weak civil societies and political institutions in a permanent state of flux, parties are even more significant factors that decisively shape the process of their European integration. In other words, the nature of these states and societies, as well as the outcomes of their post-communist transformations, are determined primarily by the beliefs and interests of political elites expressed through the attitudes and actions of political parties. Finally, party positions on the EU in Serbia and Croatia proved to be fully emblematic of their general policies and overall political

stances. Parties' most important attitudes towards fundamental political and economic issues were very well reflected in their stances on the EU. Examining these stances is thus a way to understand a great deal of party politics both in general and in the context of post-Yugoslav political space.

The remainder of this chapter outlines the history of the two countries' relationships with the EU as well as their party politics since 2000 in order to put the thesis' key finding into a wider post-Yugoslav political and social perspective. The chapter then reviews the existing general literature on party responses to the EU, identifies the most general trends in research activities and locates this dissertation within the current stands of literature. The chapter also presents the empirical and theoretical contribution of this analysis. It then lays down the methodological framework of the inquiry by discussing the research design, dependent and independent variables as well as the methods of data collection. The chapter concludes by outlining the structure of the thesis, hypotheses and most important findings.

## **1.2 Serbian and Croatian relationships with the EU/EC**

The following section outlines the relationship between Serbia/Croatia and the EC/EU since the 1970s. Its purpose is to provide the context of the thesis as well as to put the key findings into the wider perspective of these countries' controversial and difficult relations with Europe.

### **1.2.1 Serbian and Croatian relationships with the European Community until the 1990s**

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), the precursor of both countries, was the closest political and economic partner of the European Community (EC) in Eastern Europe. A number of comprehensive cooperation agreements, signed in the 1970s and 1980s, stressed 'Yugoslavia's special position as a non-aligned, European, Mediterranean state and a member of the group of 77 developing countries' (EC Commission 1979). The two parties accorded each other most-favoured-nation treatment – the import of Yugoslav industrial products to the EC was free of customs duties – while co-operation was facilitated by regular EC-Yugoslavia Joint Committees and Cooperation Councils. In the late 1980s, Yugoslavia was in a prime position to integrate into EC structures, given its relative economic development and elements of a free market economy, a relatively free and open society, and particularly a tradition of fruitful cooperation with Western countries. Furthermore, as a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement, being

neither a member of the Warsaw Pact nor NATO, the country occupied a strategic buffer zone between the Soviet block and Western Europe; it was thus an important factor in maintaining European stability.

However, as the Cold War came to an end so did Yugoslavia's privileged international position *vis-à-vis* the West. The beginning of the violent disintegration of the Yugoslav federation led to the EC decision to suspend its Cooperation Agreement with Yugoslavia in November 1991 (EC Council 1991). As the first conflicts broke out, the nature of the relationship between the two sides changed dramatically since the EC ceased to be a trading partner and became an important, though rather unsuccessful, mediator in the war that had intensified in its neighbourhood. The Maastricht Treaty, containing elements of the emerging common foreign and security policy, was drafted in December 1991, just several months after the beginning of the Yugoslav war. As such, the EC was a natural mediator that took initiative – however, it turned out to not have sufficient capacity to negotiate a peaceful solution; EC representatives were also rather ignorant and lacked a serious strategy on how to approach the Yugoslav problem given the complexity of and internal divisions on the issue (Radeljić 2010).

Although the EC's initial reaction to the crisis was that the SFRY should be preserved as an independent state, in December 1991 the Council adopted the declaration on the recognition of the new states in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. It also invited all Yugoslav republics to declare whether they wished to be recognised as independent states (EPC 1991). As a result, the EC recognised Croatia and Slovenia as independent states in January 1992, and Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992. Macedonia was only recognised in 1993 due to the dispute with Greece over its name. The two remaining Yugoslav republics, Serbia and Montenegro, formed a new federation, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in April 1992, which was not officially recognised by the EC until 1996.

### **1.2.2 A decade of lost opportunities (1990-2000)**

The decade that followed was primarily characterised by the post-Yugoslav wars as well as national and state-building issues; during that time, neither Serbia nor Croatia expressed an intention to join the EU. On the contrary, Eurosceptic and isolationist sentiments flourished across both states, most significantly in Serbia during the nationalist euphoria. While in other Central and Eastern European states 'returning to Europe' (Batory 2008b; Henderson 2008) was a key foreign policy objective and a common theme for the majority

of parties as a symbol of democracy and prosperity, the then-ruling Serbian and Croatian parties – the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union – had rather different agendas. The 1990s may therefore be seen as a decade of lost European opportunities for both countries.

Serbia's relationship with the EC/EU throughout the 1990s was primarily a reflection of its status as a pariah in the international community and a key generator of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. The country experienced the cessation of all relationships with the EC and its member states in the early 1990s. The EC's perception of Serbia's nationalist and autocratic regime, led by Slobodan Milošević, as the main culprit of the war led the Community in November 1991 to introduce a set of restrictive measures, including the termination of cooperation agreements and a recall of EC member states' ambassadors from Belgrade. The full range of sanctions was imposed in May 1992 and included an embargo on all trade other than food and medicine, a ban on all flights, as well as on cultural, scientific and sporting collaboration. After the EC called on the United Nations to exclude the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from its membership, the country was expelled from the UN and other international organisations in 1992. Finally, as a reaction to the involvement of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the EC adopted a further set of sanctions in April 1993; these included a ban on the international transport of goods, a freezing of Yugoslav assets abroad and a ban on all services except telecommunication and mail (EC Council 1993). These developments were, however, widely seen in Serbia as biased and further fuelled already prevalent anti-European sentiments. This was particularly used by anti-European and nationalist parties – such as the Serbian Radical Party, the Yugoslav Left and a number of small radical right parties that emerged in this period – as a prime example of the hostile intentions of Western countries and their historically anti-Serbian politics.

The Yugoslav conflicts ended in November 1995 with the negotiation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which stopped the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and led to the partial normalisation of the relationship between the EU and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Sanctions were abolished and the declaration on the recognition of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by the EU member states was adopted in April 1996. The EU's new regional approach, which established political and economic conditionality for the development of bilateral relations with the former Yugoslav countries, was adopted in 1997. However, as the new conflict in Kosovo developed and the Yugoslav authorities were again held

accountable for the growing violence in the province, the EU Council abolished earlier autonomous trade measures for the import of goods from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1998. Once again, the relationship between the two sides was not only interrupted due to the further disintegration of the former Yugoslav federation, but they practically went to war in March 1999. The NATO military campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, led by key EU member states, was the culmination of years of tensions between the Serbian nationalist regime and the West. The result was the defeat of Serbia, which had to withdraw its military and police forces from the province. The war, however, also indirectly led to the fall of the regime of Slobodan Milošević in 2000, as well as to Kosovo's self-proclaimed independence in 2008.

The relationship between Croatia and the EC/EU in the 1990s, although tense, never ceased. The country did not experience such dramatic events in its relationship with the West, although it found itself in unofficial isolation due to the nationalist and authoritarian character of President Tudjman's regime and its involvement in the post-Yugoslav wars. The EC did start the negotiations to conclude the cooperation and trade agreement in the mid-1990s. However, in reaction to the military operation 'Storm' against the local Serbs in August 1995, the EU Council immediately froze financial assistance and suspended negotiations, both of which were never resumed. On the other hand, Tudjman's regime strongly objected to the EU's regional approach, which was seen as an attempt to establish a new Yugoslavia, and in particular the concept of the 'Western Balkans'<sup>1</sup>, coined by the Austrian presidency of the EU Council in 1998 (Graef 2012). Tudjman also 'accused Europe of not being supportive of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and of being vindictive towards Croatia, in effect punishing it for the role it played in the destruction of Yugoslavia' (Jović 2006, p.89). As a result, there was no real intention on the part of the then-Croatian political elites to bring the country closer to the EU, although the regime insisted that Croatia was a European (rather than Balkan) country that has always belonged to the Austro-Hungarian/Central European cultural and political structure, and thus was a natural part of the larger European project (Jović, Interview 2011). Nevertheless, in an interview with the author, Vesna Škare Ožbolt (Interview 2011), Tudjman's former political advisor and vice president of the Croatian Democratic Union, argued that Tudjman has never been anti-European.

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<sup>1</sup> The Western Balkans includes Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo.



### 1.2.3 A difficult role for latecomers (2000-2012)

The nature of the relationship between the EU and these two countries fundamentally changed in the 2000s as a result of two important events. On one hand, the EU Council adopted a new, more comprehensive approach to the troublesome region in 1999: the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), aimed at supporting the Western Balkan countries' development and preparations for future EU membership. The European Council clearly stated in June 2001 that all SAP countries were potential candidates for EU membership; this was further re-affirmed at the Thessaloniki summit in June 2003 (European Council 2003). On the other hand, the fall of the Milošević regime in October 2000 as well as the electoral defeat of the Croatian Democratic Union a few months earlier opened the way for improving their relationship with the EU, given that both newly elected governments proclaimed EU membership to be their ultimate foreign policy goals. Nevertheless, the legacy of the 1990s heavily burdened both countries, impeding their transformation and democratisation and, in the case of Serbia, significantly slowed down the process of EU accession, with the consequences being felt well into the 2010s.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was included in the SAP in 2001. However, due to internal political tensions between Serbia and the Montenegrin government, which sought more independence, the accession process stalled until 2003, when the loose union of the two countries was established. The European Commission decided in 2005 to negotiate the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the new state union. However, the ever-present legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars overshadowed the process of the country's integration into the EU. The main issue throughout this decade was the inability and unwillingness of Serbian governments to arrest and extradite to the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) war crimes indictees. Although the negotiations on the SAA were opened in October 2005, they were suspended between May 2006 and June 2007 as the country did not fulfil its commitment to co-operate with the Tribunal. In the meantime, the EU recognised Montenegro as an independent state in June 2006 (following the May 2006 referendum on independence) and took note that Serbia was the legal successor of the short-lived union. Finally, the EU decided to sign the SAA with the caretaker Serbian government in April 2008, in the sole attempt to support the pro-European coalition led by the Democratic Party during the heated electoral campaign prior to the May 2008 elections. The SAA was *de facto* signed only by the pro-European half of the outgoing government, led by the Democratic Party, while another major coalition

partner, the Democratic Party of Serbia, strongly opposed it. However, the ratification of the SAA was automatically suspended, given the country's unsatisfied cooperation with the ICTY. The Council unblocked the process of ratification of the agreement in June 2010, and after a long process of ratification, the SAA came into force only in September 2013.

In the meantime, the Democratic Party-led Serbian government applied for membership of the EU in December 2009. Following the arrest of the most wanted war crime indictee, Ratko Mladić, in June 2011, the European Commission recommended that Serbia become a candidate country in October 2011. However, the last unresolved territorial issue from the 1990s, the status of Kosovo, on which Serbia and leading EU countries had entirely opposing positions, fundamentally marked the relationship between the two sides after 2008. Specifically, Kosovo was recognised by a large number of EU member states as an independent state, although the EU had no formal stance towards its status given that there was no agreement among all the member states on the issue. On the other side, the Constitution of Serbia defined Kosovo as an integral part of its territory. Serbian EU integration, therefore, again stalled, given the condition that Serbia *de facto* needed to accept and recognise the independence of this province during its EU accession. This was most obvious in December 2011 when, despite the Commission's recommendation to grant candidate status, the European Council postponed the decision. However, it granted Serbia candidacy in March 2012, following the concessions that it made with regard to Kosovo's status. Nevertheless, the start of accession negotiations was conditional upon Serbia taking further steps towards 'a visible and sustainable improvement of relations with Kosovo' (Council of Ministers 2012). Following further Serbian concessions on Kosovo, the European Council agreed in June 2013 to open accession talks with Serbia that would begin in January 2014 at the latest.

Croatian accession into the EU, although occasionally slowed and interrupted due to the 1990s legacy, has progressed since the 2000 parliamentary election, when the new centre-left government declared that EU accession was its strategic goal. The country opened negotiations for the conclusion of the SAA in November 2000 at the Zagreb summit, when the newly established Stabilisation and Association Process was launched. A year later, the Croatian Parliament accepted a resolution on EU accession, which was the first sign of an overall political consensus on Croatian EU membership. The SAA was signed in October 2001 and entered into force after being ratified by all EU member states in February 2005. In the meantime, Croatia applied for EU membership in February 2003. The European

Council granted Croatia official candidate status in June 2004, following the Commission's positive opinion on the Croatian application. However, as with Serbia, the key political condition for the start of accession negotiations was full cooperation with the ICTY, which at that time it lacked. The accession negotiations were thus postponed and only finally opened in October 2005, after a positive report by the then-ICTY chief prosecutor.

The accession process, however, did not proceed smoothly and without obstacles. Due to border disputes, Slovenia blocked the negotiations in autumn 2008 and only a year later did the two countries manage to reach an agreement to bring the disputes before an international arbitration tribunal. The country also faced difficulties in closing the chapter on competition policy due to the issue of shipbuilding subsidies, as well as the most challenging chapter on the judiciary and fundamental rights that was linked to full cooperation with the ICTY, an independent judiciary and the fight against corruption and organised crime. However, the resignation and consequent arrest of the former Prime Minister, Ivo Sanader, in December 2010, on charges of corruption, was seen as the prime indicator of an independent judiciary; in the following months, negotiations intensified and were finally concluded in June 2011. The Accession Treaty was signed in December 2011, and 66% of voters supported Croatia's accession to the EU in a referendum held in January 2012 (Croatian electoral commission 2012a). Croatia became the twenty-eighth EU member state on 1 July 2013.

This section presented the nature of relationships between Serbia/Croatia and the EC/EU since the 1970s. Although both countries experienced very dynamic and controversial relationships with the EC/EU, the case of Serbia in particular demonstrated the dramatic challenges the country faced in its interaction with the EU, which fundamentally influenced the responses of Serbian parties to Europe. In other words, traditionally strong Serbian Eurosceptics tended to be rather anti-European and generally anti-Western, partly due to very complex relations with the EU and the perceived hostility of the West throughout the post-Yugoslav crisis. On the other hand, particularly in the 1990s, Croatian Euroscepticism was less anti-European in its nature (and more anti-Yugoslav, as will be discussed in Chapter 3) despite difficulties in its relations with the EU. At the same time, the post-Yugoslav legacy in both countries significantly hindered the attempts of pro-EU political forces to bring these countries closer to the EU.

### **1.3 Serbian and Croatian party politics since 2000**

This section outlines the key events of Serbian and Croatian party politics since 2000, when both countries experienced radical political change. It aims to provide each country's wider political and social context, which significantly influenced how parties responded to the challenges brought about by European integration.

#### **1.3.1 Serbian party politics since 2000 – the agony of political and state fragmentation**

In October 2000, following a largely peaceful revolution on the streets of Belgrade, the ten-year authoritarian reign of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Radical Party came to an end. Mass protests occurred following elections for the president of what was then the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia after the opposition candidate, Vojislav Koštunica, won significantly more votes in the first round (50.24%) than the long-time Serbian and Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milošević, who received 37.15% of the total votes (Orlović 2011) but refused to accept the election results. In response to this, opposition parties held a mass anti-government rally and, with the support of police and military forces, quickly took over key state institutions, forcing Milošević to step down from power. The transition of power was completed later that year when the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) won the parliamentary election. The new government consisted of the eighteen parties of the DOS, although the Democratic Party and Mr Koštunica's Democratic Party of Serbia were by far the strongest parties in the coalition.

A new reformist government led by the president of the Democratic Party, Zoran Djindjić, managed to secure foreign financial support for the country, introduced market reforms and swiftly re-established relations with the EU and other international organisations. However, within a few months, an internal division between the Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia became apparent. The conflict intensified after the Serbian government extradited Slobodan Milošević to the ICTY in June 2001, despite strong opposition from the Democratic Party of Serbia. The conflict between the two parties was primarily the result of profound political differences. The Democratic Party advocated a pragmatic policy that would bring Serbia closer to the West, achieve rapid reintegration into the international community, and it was ready to fulfil the EU accession conditions, including the extradition of Serbian citizens indicted by The Hague Tribunal. On the other side, the Democratic Party of Serbia opposed cooperation with The Hague Tribunal, favouring voluntary surrender of the indicted. In addition, the parties of the old regime

denied the legitimacy of the newly established system, viewed the democratic changes as a coup and believed that Milošević had been kidnapped and illegally extradited (Goati 2009).

A radical change came after the assassination of Prime Minister Djindjić in March 2003, when the remaining cabinet members were unable to proceed with economic and social reforms. Consequently, an early election was called later that year. Election results indicated that voters wished to punish democratic parties, as the radical right Serbian Radical Party, a member of the old regime, received the highest number of votes. However, a minority government was formed by other parties: the Democratic Party of Serbia (whose leader, Vojislav Koštunica, became Serbian Prime Minister), G17 Plus and a coalition of the Serbian Renewal Movement and New Serbia. Since this coalition did not have enough parliamentary votes to secure a majority, the government was supported by the party of the old regime – the Socialist Party of Serbia.

The incoming government's policies clearly deviated from those of the previous government, particularly regarding cooperation with the ICTY and attitudes towards the legacy of the Milošević regime. It immediately suspended cooperation with the ICTY by insisting on the voluntary surrender of individuals indicted for war crimes. As a result, financial support from Western countries was suspended, while the feasibility study on Serbia's readiness to enter into a contractual relationship with the EU was postponed. However, the negative economic effects of these policies and poor results of the ruling parties in the 2004 presidential and local elections led the Democratic Party of Serbia to gradually modify its attitude. As a consequence, the government managed to persuade 14 people charged with the war crimes to surrender voluntarily, which led to the EU's decision to resume negotiations with Serbia.

The following year, the citizens of Montenegro supported independence of the republic at a referendum, despite sharp opposition from the Serbian government. In this way, Serbia renewed its independence after nearly 90 years. Following the proclamation of the new constitution, a parliamentary election was held in January 2007. The Serbian Radical Party again emerged as the strongest party in Parliament. However, after lengthy and difficult negotiations, the Democratic Party of Serbia turned to the pro-European parties and formed a government with the Democratic Party and G17 Plus, while its president, Koštunica, again became the Prime Minister (Stojić 2010).

Initially, it seemed that the new government had managed to preserve its fragile internal unity, which was reflected primarily in a common attitude towards Kosovo's status and European integration. However, as negotiations on the status of Kosovo progressed in a direction unfavourable to Serbia later in 2007, conflicts within the ruling coalition became more visible – there was a key difference on the measures to be taken as a reaction to the Kosovan declaration of independence adopted in February 2008 and EU involvement in this process. Koštunica took a hard stance towards the EU, arguing that, under new circumstances, Serbia must refuse to sign the SAA with the EU; other coalition partners argued that the SAA was neutral on the issue of Kosovo's status (Stojić 2010). These irreconcilable views on future of the country and how to react to Kosovan independence, which was supported by key EU member states, led to an early election in May 2008.

The issue of the EU was the single most important topic during the campaign because the election was widely perceived as a referendum on Serbian EU membership. The coalition that had formed around the Democratic Party of Serbia argued in favour of stopping further integration into the EU until the EU explicitly recognised the international borders of Serbia. It also pledged stronger measures against the countries that had recognised Kosovo, the preservation of military neutrality, as well as strengthening cooperation with countries in favour of the Serbian position on Kosovo, primarily the Russian Federation. Conversely, the coalition led by the Democratic Party stressed that the issue of Kosovo and the EU were two separate issues and that Serbia must not return to the isolation seen in the 1990s. This coalition of parties was openly supported by the EU and this was most visible when the SAA was signed with the pro-European part of the Serbian caretaker government in April 2008.

The election constituted a victory for the coalition associated with the Democratic Party and G17 Plus. Unexpectedly, the Democratic Party, faced with the lack of an absolute majority in parliament, formed a government with the coalition based around the key former political opponent, the Socialist Party of Serbia, which gradually adopted more pro-European rhetoric and policies (see Chapter 4). Finally, as a result of the lost election and internal conflicts over the issue of EU membership, a group of senior party officials left the Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party and formed the Serbian Progressive Party in September 2008. The newly formed party adopted fundamentally new, pro-EU rhetoric, started advocating Serbian EU membership and rapidly became the leading opposition party. On the other hand, the government gradually lost popularity after 2008, primarily due to a

severe economic crisis, which opened the door for the Progressives to win the 2012 parliamentary and presidential elections. Following a turnaround in which the Progressive's candidate, Tomislav Nikolić, won the second round of the presidential election, the Serbian Progressive Party formed a government with the Socialist, New Serbia and G17 Plus, while the Democratic Party went into opposition.

### **1.3.2 Croatian party politics since 2000 – a gradual post-conflict normalisation and stabilisation**

The domestic party politics of Croatia in the early 2000s closely resembled that of Serbia. Weakened by the death of its leader and Croatian President Franjo Tuđman in December 1999, the Croatian Democratic Union lost the 2000 parliamentary and presidential elections for the first time since the party's creation. The new government was formed by the loosely centre-left 'Coalition of Six' parties that had opposed Tuđman's autocratic rule in the 1990s; it consisted of the Social Democratic Party of Croatia, Croatian Social Liberal Party, Croatian Peasant Party, Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats, Liberal Party and Istrian Democratic Assembly. However, as in Serbia, differences over the issue of cooperation with the ICTY between two of the leading parties in the coalition, the Croatian Social Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party, resulted in the resignation of the cabinet led by Ivica Račan, president of the Social Democratic Party, in July 2002. In addition, due to the disagreement with the Social Democratic Party, the Istrian Democratic Assembly withdrew from the coalition a year earlier. The second government, formed by the four remaining parties, tried to continue with the reform and EU agenda but soon faced new tensions between the Social Democratic Party and the conservative Croatian Peasant Party.

When the ICTY accused the two Croatian generals, Ante Gotovina and Janko Bobetko, of war crimes in 2001, it sparked a political crisis and strong resistance among the nationalist parties. As in Serbia, friction also came from important segments of the administration – such as the intelligence services, police, judiciary and the army, which remained largely unreformed and significantly slowed down the implementation of reforms and new pro-EU policies (Jović 2006). The weak ruling coalition, faced with protests, although essentially oriented towards the EU, was unable or unwilling to co-operate with the ICTY and extradite the indictees, and it actually contested the indictment as unlawful. The government's failure to capture its indicted citizens (although some individuals voluntarily surrendered to the ICTY) raised alarm bells across the international community (Roter and

Bojinović 2005). As a consequence, this led to a significant slowdown in the process of ratification of the SAA and the suspension of US financial aid in late 2002.

The key and rather surprising breakthrough came in late 2003. Following the November election, the reformed nationalist Croatian Democratic Union, led by its new leader, Ivo Sanader, came back to power. This government continued with the reforms and decided to pursue the EU agenda set by the previous cabinet, although Sanader had vocally opposed cooperation with the ICTY while in opposition. However, having previously neutralised nationalist factions within the Croatian Democratic Union and faced with either international isolation or the start of accession negotiations, Sanader decided to work closely with EU member states. As a result, General Gotovina was finally arrested in December 2005, which considerably accelerated the country's accession into the EU. In the November 2007 election, the Croatian Democratic Union again won the most votes, although the opposition Social Democratic Party also performed well. It turned out that the 'Yellow-Green Coalition' of the Croatian Social-Liberal Party and Croatian Peasant Party played a major role in the formation of a new government. After intense negotiations, Sanader secured support from this coalition as well as the Independent Democratic Serb Party and formed his second cabinet in January 2008. However, Sanader resigned abruptly in June 2009, which later proved to be the result of his involvement in the corruption scandals, for which he was sentenced to ten years in prison in 2012.

The government was taken over by Jadranka Kosor, who also became president of the Croatian Democratic Union at a time of grave economic crisis and blocked accession negotiations with the EU due to a territorial dispute with Slovenia. Kosor, however, managed to agree on how to solve the long-standing row with Slovenia and thus re-started negotiations in November 2009, but also successfully dealt with high-level corruption cases within her own party. Nevertheless, deeply compromised by a series of corruption scandals coupled with extremely poor performance during the economic crisis, and despite successfully concluded accession negotiations, the Croatian Democratic Union and its partners suffered a severe electoral defeat in the December 2011 election. The new cabinet was formed by the centre-left 'Kukuriku coalition', which consisted of the Social Democratic Party, Croatian People's Party, Istrian Democratic Assembly and Croatian Party of Pensioners.



This section introduced the empirically peculiar political and social contexts of two former Yugoslav countries, in which parties adopted or changed positions on the EU since 2000. Both countries initially faced strikingly similar issues as a consequence of the 1990s – namely, cooperation with the ICTY, strong nationalist forces that sought to reverse changes achieved by pro-EU governments, weak coalition governments that did not manage to deliver expected changes – which resulted in slow and painful first steps towards the EU. However, over time Croatia, unlike Serbia, managed to politically stabilise and pursue its EU agenda more rapidly for two key reasons. First, having successfully solved the issue of sovereignty and territorial integrity by 1998, the country did not face the state building challenges that crucially characterised Serbian party politics (first in relation with Montenegro, then more dramatically with Kosovo). Second, the key transformation of a conservative and nationalist block of parties from a Eurosceptic to a pro-European pole occurred with the reorientation of the Croatian Democratic Union in 2003, which was crucial for the overall domestic political consensus on EU integration that stabilised the country's political systems. The reorientation of parties with similar political heritage (the Socialist Party of Serbia, Serbian Progressive Party) occurred only in the late 2000s in Serbia, with comparable positive effects on both the country's EU membership bid and the domestic party system, which became less polarised and more consensus driven. What was also remarkable is that once hard Eurosceptic parties in both countries essentially experienced the same pattern of transformation, driven by the same or very similar strategic factors, which is discussed in Chapter 4.

## **1.4 General literature review**

This section provides a general overview of the literature and locates the thesis within the existing scholarly work. It examines the two most important approaches to the study of party responses to the EU, and also looks at the work that dealt comparatively with Serbian and Croatian party politics. The two approaches most relevant for this thesis were developed within the literature on the domestic politics of European integration, and the literature on the EU's impact on member and candidate states. While the former school, rooted in the tradition of general party politics, focused on domestic factors (such as party ideology and strategy), the latter emphasised the importance of external factors, primarily the leverage of the EU. This section illustrates the key debates and the major limitations of these schools, as well as how the thesis addresses these shortcomings.

It is important to note the structure of this thesis. This section provides a general overview of the existing literature. It aims to present the theoretical underpinnings of this research and to derive the independent variables. A more detailed review of the specific literature pertaining to the explanatory variables is conducted at the beginning of each of the individual chapters dealing with the factors that may determine party stances on the EU (Chapters 3 to 7). These five chapters are thus organised thematically around the five independent variables, not around the two cases examined. They review the specific relevant literature, generate the hypotheses, elaborate on the empirical data and test the hypotheses. The thesis is constructed in this way given the different nature of the explanatory factors examined in this research and their varied impact on party responses to Europe, as well as the diverse existing literature that deals with them. Therefore, the purpose of this section is to present an overview of the key debates in the existing literature, identify most general trends and explain the rationale for engaging with some strands, while pointing to the weaknesses and gaps in other strands.

#### **1.4.1 Literature on the domestic politics of European integration**

The thesis is rooted in the growing literature on the domestic politics of European integration; more specifically, the literature dealing with parties' attitudes towards the EU. The dominant field of inquiry within this scholarly tradition was focused on Eurosceptic party stances (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2000, 2008a, 2008b; Sitter 2001, 2002; Pridham 2002; Szczerbiak 2008), although a number of authors (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Conti 2003; Batory 2008a) dealt with both negative and positive party attitudes towards the EU. However, both groups of scholars were interested in the same issues and the debate was predominantly centred around two key questions: (i) how to conceptualise and categorise party positions on the EU, and (ii) what are the key drivers of party stances towards the EU? As we shall see in Chapter 2, the precise meaning of the term 'Euroscepticism' as well as how to conceptualise and categorise party stances on the EU remained contested among scholars coming from this tradition (Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Flood and Usherwood 2007; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b; Kaniok 2012). On the other hand, these authors generally agreed that domestic factors were the key determinants of party responses to the EU (as will be discussed in Chapters 3 to 6), although without having the same opinion on the importance of individual domestic drivers. As a result, the debate on causal factors that determine party

stances was mostly concerned with long-term party ideological commitments and strategic incentives in the context of electoral competition.

A significant group of scholars gave priority to party ideology (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002) by claiming that parties assimilate European issues within existing ideologies that arise from traditional social cleavages. In other words, they argued that there is a strong causal relationship between the conventional left-right or 'new politics' dimensions of party contestation and their positioning on European integration. Other authors, however, claimed that political parties are pragmatic actors that respond to strategic incentives in the context of national elections and that stances on the EU are strategically, rather than ideologically, driven. Sitter (2001) specifically argued that Euroscepticism emerges as a phenomenon that could be linked to a range of ideologies, since it is driven by party strategy. Sitter and Batory (2008) further specified that the extent to which parties' policy preferences are translated into actual opposition to, or support for, European integration primarily depends on their short-term strategic goals – namely, the quest for votes and access to executive office. Between these views, a number of scholars persuasively argued that the interplay between ideology and strategy may account for party response to the EU. Following this logic, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) suggested that underlying party positions on the issue of European integration are determined by a blend of the party's ideology and what it perceives to be the interests of its members. They, however, also argued that there is no straightforward relationship between general party ideology and stances on Europe, since 'it is not possible to "read off" a party's position from whatever ideological family it belongs to' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b, p.257). Kopecký and Mudde (2002) made the case that ideology determines a party's support for the general ideas that underlie the EU, whereas strategy may explain a party's support for the EU as it is. Batory (2002) similarly claimed that ideology structures underlying attitudes to integration, but that parties are limited when forming these attitudes by short-term competitive pressures and the need to be acceptable as coalition partners.

Other potential drivers of party stances include the institutional environment, such as the nature of party systems (Lees 2008), the type of the electoral systems (Aspinwall 2004; Lee 2008) as well as state administrative structures (Lees 2008). Party position in the party system was also recognised as an important casual factor, given that peripheral parties tend to be more predisposed to using Euroscepticism as a mobilising issue than parties more

central to their party systems (Taggart 1998). However, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2013) later found that Euroscepticism ceased to be a peripheral phenomenon and that government participation seems to have a moderating effect on parties that express Eurosceptic sentiments. Another contested issue is the relationship between party voters and general public perception of the EU *vis-à-vis* parties' stances on this issue. While it appears that public opinion is not a key factor for party positioning (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b), there are different views on the importance of core voters' concerns about the EU for political parties. Batory (2008a, p.22), for instance, argued that party positions are influenced by opinion among its core voters in cases 'where strong constituency ties and economic vulnerability of the party's core electoral base to EU policies strengthen parties' incentives for taking up the European issue'. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) similarly claimed that goal-seeking parties may undertake an economic cost-benefit analysis of how European integration is likely to benefit their supporters and adopt an underlying position on Europe accordingly. On the other hand, Marks and Wilson (2000, p. 434) stressed that 'parties are not empty vessels into which issue positions are poured in response to electoral or constituency pressures' and, therefore, parties form positions mostly irrespective of their core voters.

The thesis engages directly with the theoretical debates developed within this scholarly tradition. It does so by identifying the factors that have been in the centre of the debates over the causal drivers of party positions on Europe, and by testing their effects in the context of Serbian and Croatian party politics. These are: party ideology and identity, party strategy and tactics, party position within the party system and party relations with electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups. Furthermore, the thesis aims to address some of the weaknesses of the domestic politics-focused approach. Specifically, this school, for the most part, ignored the effects of external factors on the formation of party stances given, as Batory (2008a) argued, their relatively limited independent impact. The exception was Pridham (2002, 2008) who found a strong link between parties' transnational affiliations and their approach to European integration. Pridham (2008) specified that this was due to the fact that pro-EU commitment was one of the key conditions placed by transnational party federations on national parties interested in their membership. Drawing on his arguments, the thesis fills the gap in this strand of the literature by analysing national parties' relations with European party federations as one more potentially important driver of their attitudes towards the EU. In this way, the thesis also attends to another shortcoming of this strand. The majority of these scholars, with the notable exceptions of

Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001, 2002, 2008) and Batory (2008a), looked at the limited number of individual causal factors, mostly as a result of the research design they employed (see Section 1.6.1). Scholars thus examined either ideology (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe et al. 2002; Marks et al. 2006), strategy (Sitter 2011), party position in the party system (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2013) or focused on a combination of two factors, such as ideology and party position in the party system (Conti 2003), or ideology and strategy (Batory 2002; Sitter and Batory 2008). This, however, seems to be an inadequate approach to discerning the complex causal mechanism behind party responses to Europe. By contrast, this thesis looks at the effect but also importantly at the interaction between the five explanatory variables, as elaborated above, in order to understand how contemporary parties determine stances towards the EU.

#### **1.4.2 Literature on the EU's impact on member and candidate states**

Another approach to the study of party stances towards the EU was developed within the tradition of European studies. Unlike the previous school, this strand of the literature was primarily concerned with the impact of the EU on member and candidate states. There are two broad groups of authors coming from this scholarly tradition that are relevant to this research. The first group sought to examine the general impact of the EU and European transnational parties on party politics in member and candidate countries. The second group was concerned with the specific impact of the EU on political parties in the context of accession conditions imposed on EU candidates and, to a lesser extent, in relation to EU member states, and may be thus termed the EU conditionality literature.

Scholars from the first group looked at a number of changes within national parties and party systems that may be attributed to the influence of the EU or European transnational party federations. Ladrech (2002), for example, found some evidence of limited EU impact on parties' policy and programmatic content, organisation, patterns of party competition, party-government relations, as well as relations beyond the national party system. Haughton (2009) similarly argued that there was little policy borrowing from European transnational parties in the case of parties in Central and Eastern Europe in the following areas: the role of European policy specialists within party decision-making, the distribution of power within parties, the use of the European issue in interparty competition, the prominence of European issues in party programmes, and the links with European party federations. Enyedi and Lewis (2006), however, found impacts of European party federations on, primarily, social democratic parties in their analysis of four areas: the

characteristics of party systems, the role of European party federations in the ideological transformation of parties, the place of Euroscepticism in electoral competition and the degree to which EU-related attitudes have received effective representation. Dakowska (2002), Szczerbiak and Bil (2009) and Holmes and Lightfoot (2011), who specifically examined party stances on the EU in relation to European transnational party federations, also found some, but generally limited, impact of these organisations on national political parties.

This strand of the literature, reviewed in detail in Chapter 7, advanced our understanding of party responses to the EU, particularly given that the literature on domestic politics of European integration largely ignored external drivers of party responses to the EU. The thesis engages with the debates of this scholarly tradition by recognising party relations with European transnational party federations as well as the EU (specifically, the European Parliament and European Commission) as an important independent variable to be examined. It looks at the two under-researched cases of Serbia and Croatia, where the EU was strongly present from the very beginning of their post-communist transformations, as discussed in Section 1.2. However, this scholarly tradition somewhat ignored party relations with national parties from EU member states and particularly Western ambassadors who, as we shall see in Chapter 7, exerted significant influence on some Serbian parties. This thesis therefore addressed this weakness and looks at the independent impact of these explanatory variables.

On the other hand, the second strand, i.e., the EU conditionality literature, was concerned primarily with the specific set of political and economic conditions that the EU imposes on candidate (or member) states and the profound changes that this may induce in a number of areas (Grabbe 2003, 2006; Schimmelfennig 2005; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Sedelmeier 2011; Vachudova 2005). These scholars primarily studied the effects of the EU's 'top-down' influence in the context of what they usually termed 'Europeanisation'.<sup>2</sup> What essentially characterises this camp is the assumption that the external force of the EU is the single most important catalyst for significant changes in domestic actors, including national political parties. These authors specifically argued that political elites transform and adopt more pro-EU positions as a result of two mechanisms. First, pro-European

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<sup>2</sup> This thesis does not use the term 'Europeanisation' given that despite numerous attempts there has been no agreement among scholars on its precise meaning (Radaelli 2003; Mair 2004; Ladrech 2010) and it has been therefore used to describe a number of different phenomena. The term thus experienced 'conceptual stretching' and seems not to be a useful analytical tool. The term 'EU impact' is used instead to denote changes that may be a result of the 'top-down' influence of the EU on member or candidate countries.

transformation may be the result of strict conditionality and tangible material incentives provided by the EU. Second, it may be a consequence of the EU's socialisation and persuasion that gradually changed the perception of elites' identities and interests, so that they accept EU norms as legitimate and intrinsically good, irrespective of material incentives.

Although acknowledging its contribution to understanding the EU's potential impact on national politics, this thesis is not rooted in this tradition, for four reasons. First, it appears that the EU conditionality literature puts too much emphasis on external, EU-based leverage in an attempt to account for changes in national settings. These authors seem to neglect the domestic level, where national party politics has its own logic, often independent of EU conditionality or socialisation. In other words, although these authors recognised the importance of the interplay between international and domestic factors, including domestic politics (Sedelmeier 2011), they have been struggling to conceptualise the impact of domestic politics and account for the motives behind the actions of domestic actors. This thesis does this and aims to understand the behaviour of political parties as important domestic actors by employing the logic of comparative party politics. This is one of the thesis contributions, which is complementary to the EU conditionality literature – it aims to help us understand how domestic political actors behave and mediate EU influence.

Second, national politics has essentially different characteristics compared to politics and policies. As a result, the effectiveness and mode of the EU's impact in this area is rather different. Specifically, as Sedelmeier (2011) argued, the EU does not usually attempt to exercise direct influence on party systems and individual parties (unlike national politics and policies), except when it takes sides in national elections against nationalist and authoritarian parties, which was the case in the Serbian 2008 election (Stojić 2010). Political consensus on EU integration may be an unofficial aim of EU institutions or European party federations, not least because that can foster candidate countries' EU accession, so it may be in their interest to minimise the political significance of Eurosceptic parties. However, no direct impact can be expected. As we shall see in Chapter 7, evidence from this study provides support for the idea that the EU did not directly aim to change the positions of Eurosceptic parties in the analysed countries. Its leverage was rather indirect and most visible in the fact that EU officials did not have any contacts with hard

Eurosceptic and nationalist parties, which may be seen as an unofficial policy of isolation of such parties.

In addition, this camp assumes that the credibility and clarity of the EU's strict and easily recognisable conditions and rewards are the most important factors that may explain EU-induced transformation of domestic actors. This may work quite well in the case of state institutions and policies, but party politics appear to be less suitable to being impacted in this way. There was a lack of both clear demands and credible positive incentives for parties that did transform, with no direct use of conditionality on the part of the EU. On the other hand, changes may be the result of the EU's socialisation of domestic actors, who internalise EU norms as legitimate and intrinsically good. However, it is very difficult to differentiate between the two. In other words, how can we know that the change in party position reflects a fundamental shift of the party's views on the EU as a result of socialisation and that it was not a pure consequence of strategic calculation aimed at getting tangible benefits? This logic of change, proposed by these authors, may better work in the case of European transnational parties, not the EU institutions, due to: (i) the set of clearly identified benefits that membership in transnational parties could bring to national parties, (ii) concrete policies employed by these transnational organisations aimed at the 'European socialisation' of national parties.

Third, some of these authors assume that party systems in candidate countries almost inevitably transform, with practically all individual parties becoming more pro-EU under the EU influence. As Vachudova (2012, p.1) argued, 'in almost all cases, major political parties respond to EU leverage by embracing agendas that are consistent with EU requirements in the run up to negotiations for membership'. This seems to be a rather deterministic approach that ignores the complexity of the causal mechanism of different internal and external factors that may shape party responses to the EU. Moreover, empirical evidence from this research shows that parties do not necessarily become pro-EU under European pressure, given that there were significant parties that did not abandon Euroscepticism, or even became more Eurosceptic despite (or exactly because of) EU behaviour, even though a large number of parties did transform and adopted more pro-EU positions over time.

Finally, this approach appears to be too normative, since it views transformation of party stances on the EU as a static and mechanistic process in which the EU strives to



‘Europeanise’ these parties (and countries in general), according to a set of predetermined and constant values that are presented as ultimately unquestionable and unchangeable categories. In other words, it seems that the EU has a mission to transform and make ‘pro-European’ the ‘disobedient’ parties and countries in the East that are imbued with nationalism and illiberal values – seen, for example, in ‘Serbia’s reluctance to Europeanize’ (Subotić 2010). In addition, any scepticism towards the EU is identified with nationalism and therefore needs to be changed, while such parties are practically denied political legitimacy (Vachudova 2012). In other words, EU accession is seen as an almost teleological, predetermined process in which political elites sooner or later undergo the process of ‘identity convergence’ and adoption of ‘European ideas’ (Subotić 2010), or shift their agendas to make them EU compatible due to the popularity of joining the EU among the electorate (Vachudova 2012). In addition, this approach seems to neglect the fact the EU itself has been in the state of constant change (particularly since the 2008 economic and financial crisis) which strongly affected its relation with these countries and shaped conditions under which their parties may ‘Europeanise’.

### **1.4.3 Comparative Serbian and Croatian party politics**

Serbia and Croatia have been studied comparatively in relation to their post-Yugoslav transition and EU accession. Given their similar starting positions in the early 1990s, a number of authors tried to explain why they followed somewhat different trajectories, which resulted in a Croatian success and a Serbian failure to come closer to the EU. Ramet (2011) argued that differences in institutional structures and political culture have been more important than political corruption or criminalisation in explaining the political paths of these two countries. However, it is more plausible that, as Massari (2005) argued, this was due to both specific internal political issues and EU policies. Specifically, Massari claimed that the crucial explanatory factors were the cohesiveness of national institutions, the focus of political elites and the effectiveness of strategies aimed at promoting European integration as well as the strength of anti-European military, security and police structures. In addition, he argued that the international community’s ‘differentiated’ policies *vis-à-vis* these countries had an important impact in determining the direction of their reforms, primarily by exacerbating domestic dilemmas for problem-ridden countries such as Serbia-Montenegro. Fink-Hafner (2008) posited that the different outcomes of EU accession of former Yugoslav republics were due to differences in the institutionalisation of the national party systems, the European socialisation of national parties’ elites, as well as voters’

attitudes to their country's integration with the EU. Finally, Zakošek (2008) identified the important differences that impacted these countries' transformations. These were the lower level of institutionalisation, incomplete state building and a polarised party system in Serbia, and a higher level of institutionalisation, complete state building and moderate party pluralism in Croatia.

Moreover, given the specific process of Slovakian EU accession, which to some extent resembled the more 'complex' cases of Serbia and Croatia due to the nature of Mečiar's governments in the 1990s as well as the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, scholars tended to compare these countries. Field (2000) thus examined the factors that caused Slovakia, Croatia and Serbia to be 'awkward states' and argued that in all three countries the failure of government to accept and pursue democratic norms has been the main cause of 'awkwardness'. Haughton and Fisher (2008) examined how the post-federal experience impacted the rise as well as the transformation of centre-right parties in Croatia and Slovakia. They argued that these parties' decision to abandon strong national appeals and to re-brand themselves as mainstream European centre-right parties was primarily triggered by a combination of electoral defeat and the desire for international respectability.

Previous studies also provide limited comparative analysis of the general factors that drive party politics in these countries. Existing literature, nevertheless, emphasises the dominance of concerns regarding nation- and state-building in these societies, noting that the 1990s conflicts only further exacerbated this tendency. For example, Stojiljković (2011) asserted that historical-ethnic and cultural-value cleavages, especially divisions between traditional/conservative nationalism and civic modernism/reformism, impacted Serbian political parties' stances and effectively shaping the country's party politics. Vukomanović (2007) noted the same, namely that the most important line of party competition was between nationalists and cosmopolitans, emphasising that the issue of Serbian national identity was the most dominant from the very beginning of multiparty system. Spasojević (2011) also asserted that a cleavage between traditionalism and modernism characterised Serbian multi-party system and played a decisive role in its political life. Pavlović (2011) noted that the key drivers of party politics were ideological and value-based cleavages found on the (re)traditionalism vs. civic modernisation axis. Similarly, Čular and Gregurić (2007) maintained that the ideological cultural cleavage based on two different conceptions of cultural identities and political communities (in the process of nation-state building and modernization) was historically most pronounced in Croatia. Zakošek (2007, p.35) thus

concluded that ‘the nation-building and state-building processes among the South Slav nations that formed Yugoslavia were predominant *vis-à-vis* other fundamental processes that shaped these societies during the last century and half (modernization, industrialization, economic growth, social reform, democratization) in a way that is hardly present in any other part of Europe’.

In an attempt to account for this trend, Stojiljković (2011a) argued that Serbia is as a relatively undeveloped and heterogeneous society without critically conscious citizens. He explained that the lack of democratic tradition and culture, coupled with a weak civil society and underdeveloped democratic institutions, crucially affected its party system. Pavlović (2011) asserted that number of factors resulted in the predominance of national and statehood issues in Serbia. He specifically cited the importance of nationalism, noting that most parties built a strong national component into their identity, with commitment to nationalism or ‘flirting’ with it being one of the most common features of Serbian multi-party system. In addition, Pavlović argued that a large part of the intellectual elite enthusiastically embraced the role of creators of nationalist euphoria. Moreover, he found that war and post-war experience provided social conditions conducive to the development and flourishing of radical right political forces. Pavlović (2011, p. 141) thus concluded that the dominance of traditional values in the population, unfavourable for far-reaching democratic changes, resulted in ‘the whole party system being moved towards the right’. Furthermore, Čular and Gregurić (2007) argued that in addition to these factors, Croatia also had to manage a nation- and state-building process with the creation of non-existing state institutions that decisively drove its party politics in the similar direction. As a result, party politics and general party stances across both countries have been predominantly driven by the ever-present issues of nationhood, statehood, and identity.

Some authors did note that similar tendencies may have been present in other Central and East European countries. However, the post-Yugoslav conflicts uniquely defined Serbian and Croatian societies and directly impacted their party systems. Specifically, AntoniĆ (2007) argued that the dominance of identity issue also marked the initial phase of party system developments in other post-communist countries. However, as he observed, the cases of the post-communist Czech Republic, Poland or Hungary show that the significance of identity politics decreased during the transition, while social cleavages based on tangible socio-economic interests became dominant. AntoniĆ (2007, p.61) thus asserted that (in contrast to Serbia) ‘these countries did not have Kosovo. They did not have a

territorial dispute with a strong minority that is related to the very foundation of the state'. As a consequence, there appears to be a consensus in the comparative literature that Serbian and Croatian parties formed key policies and stances under peculiar post-Yugoslav settings that crucially affected their positions, including those on the EU.

Finally, scholars rarely examined specifically Serbian and Croatian political parties' stances on the EU. Those who attempted to analyse party stances towards the EU did so primarily in relation to the wider Eurosceptic sentiments in these societies (Antonić 2012, 2012a; Milardović 2012). Moreover, comparative studies of these two countries together, and in relation to other European countries, are almost non-existent. Large comparative studies of party positions on the EU in the majority of European countries (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001, 2002, 2008) did not include Serbian and Croatian parties. It was only Konitzer (2011) who conducted a comparative study of party rhetoric and stances on the EU across both countries. In an attempt to explain the transformation of former Eurosceptic parties in Serbia and Croatia, he employed a novel approach by focusing on intra-party dynamics in 'EU-sceptic' and 'anti-EU' parties. Konitzer argued that the pressure of public opinion and external veto actors created intra-party splits between 'extroverts' seeking to improve their parties' electoral prospects by following public trends, and 'introverts' that sought to maintain their parties' current EU-sceptic/anti-EU course. After a detailed examination of individual parties, he pointed out that the results of intra-party struggle determined whether a party adopted new rhetoric, maintained its existing rhetoric on the EU or even disintegrated. Konitzer concluded that instrumental rationality (i.e., parties' strategic concerns) rather than socialisation towards European ideals was the strongest factor driving party stances, as well as the significant impact of the international community on adaptation processes within these parties.

In summary, there are a number of broad positions on the thesis research question. The thesis draws heavily from the literature on the domestic politics of European integration, most specifically the strand dealing with political parties' stances towards the EU and particularly party-based Euroscepticism. To a lesser degree, it is based on the literature concerned with the general EU impacts on member and candidate states; however, it also argues that the EU conditionality literature is not best suited to examine party responses to Europe. As a result, the thesis identifies both internal and external factors as independent variables, although there is an emphasis on domestic drivers of party attitudes towards the

EU. The study is thus primarily grounded in the tradition of domestic party politics, while acknowledging the significant impact of the EU on party positioning on this issue.

## **1.5 Contribution of the research**

This section outlines the key contributions that this thesis aims to achieve. The thesis specifically seeks: (i) to make a major new empirical contribution to our knowledge on party positions on the EU, and (ii) to move forward the theoretical scholarly debate outlined in the previous section. Given the lack of wider scholarly interest in a comparative analysis of Serbian and Croatian party politics and particularly their parties' positions on the EU (as discussed in the previous section), this thesis fills this empirical gap in the existing literature and brings two specific post-Yugoslav cases into the academic debate. There is very little known about these countries' parties and the thesis makes a significant empirical contribution by looking systematically and comparatively at two new and under-researched, yet empirically rich, cases from the European periphery. It does so by using an original and fresh dataset compiled primarily through an extensive set of interviews with senior party officials, country experts and officials of the EU and European transnational party federations (see Appendix 1).

Furthermore, the thesis makes a theoretical contribution by using a new set of cases to test, amend and develop the literature on party positions on the EU. In other words, it intends to advance the existing literature by testing how well theoretical propositions are able to travel to other contexts, and it does this in a number of ways. First, the thesis examines five explanatory variables, with each potentially having some impact on party positions on the EU. This is an approach rarely used in in-depth analyses of party responses to Europe, since the prevalent method was to focus on the limited number of causal factors, as discussed in the previous section. The thesis therefore aims to contribute to the literature on party attitudes towards the EU by looking comparatively at the individual impact of five factors as well as the interaction between them, with an aim to disentangle their causal effect. More specifically, by focusing on ideology and strategy as two important factors in relation to other potentially significant factors, it aims to contribute to the dominant 'ideology vs. strategy' debate within this scholarly tradition. In addition, the thesis intends to advance the literature by analysing the effects of explanatory variables that have been rarely studied in other cases. These are: party bilateral relations with foreign parties, linkages with domestic socio-economic groups (financial and lobby groups, trade unions,

non-governmental organisations and national churches) as well as foreign governments, which proved to be important factors in some cases, yet largely neglected in the comparative literature.

Second, by looking at explanatory factors stemming from the domestic and international (EU) levels and how they interrelate, the thesis makes a contribution to both the literature on the domestic politics of European integration and the literature on the EU's impact on member and candidate states. Unlike these two schools, which mostly ignored each other and focused on either internal or external factors respectively, this thesis argues that both factors may account for party responses to Europe. It specifically aims to advance our understanding of how domestic political actors behave and mediate significant EU influence in EU (potential) candidate states. Third, the thesis hopes to contribute to the ongoing scholarly debate on the categorisation of party attitudes towards the EU by critically examining the current models and categorising the stances of political parties in Serbia and Croatia, which will be discussed in Chapter 2. Fourth, the thesis contributes to the existing literature on party politics in Central and Eastern Europe by identifying and classifying the core ideological positions of Serbian and Croatian parties, through looking at parties' genesis, their fundamental policies and transnational linkages. It also identifies the nature of these party systems from a comparative perspective. Fifth, by looking at the fundamental transformation of some parties' ideologies and stances on the EU, the thesis hopes to advance the literature dealing with party transformation and how parties make difficult political decisions in general. Finally, by examining the relationship between party stances toward the EU and the preferences of their voters and the general public, the thesis aims to advance the literature concerned with the links between political elites and mass public in general.

## **1.6 Research design and methodology**

This section lays down the methodological framework of this research. It outlines the dependent and independent variables, discusses the study's research design and the case selection. This section also examines the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of collecting data and introduces the methods employed in this study: elite interviewing and a qualitative document analysis of party documents.

The research question that the thesis aims to answer is: *why and how did political parties in Serbia and Croatia adopt or change their positions on the EU and European integration*. The

dependent variable of this research is, therefore, *the attitudes of political parties in Serbia and Croatia towards the substance of the European integration*. The thesis draws on the five independent variables that may influence parties' attitudes towards the EU, which are derived from the existing theoretical literature generally discussed in Section 1.4. A detailed examination of the relevant comparative literature is presented at the beginning of the thesis' central chapters (Chapters 3 to 7). The independent variables are:

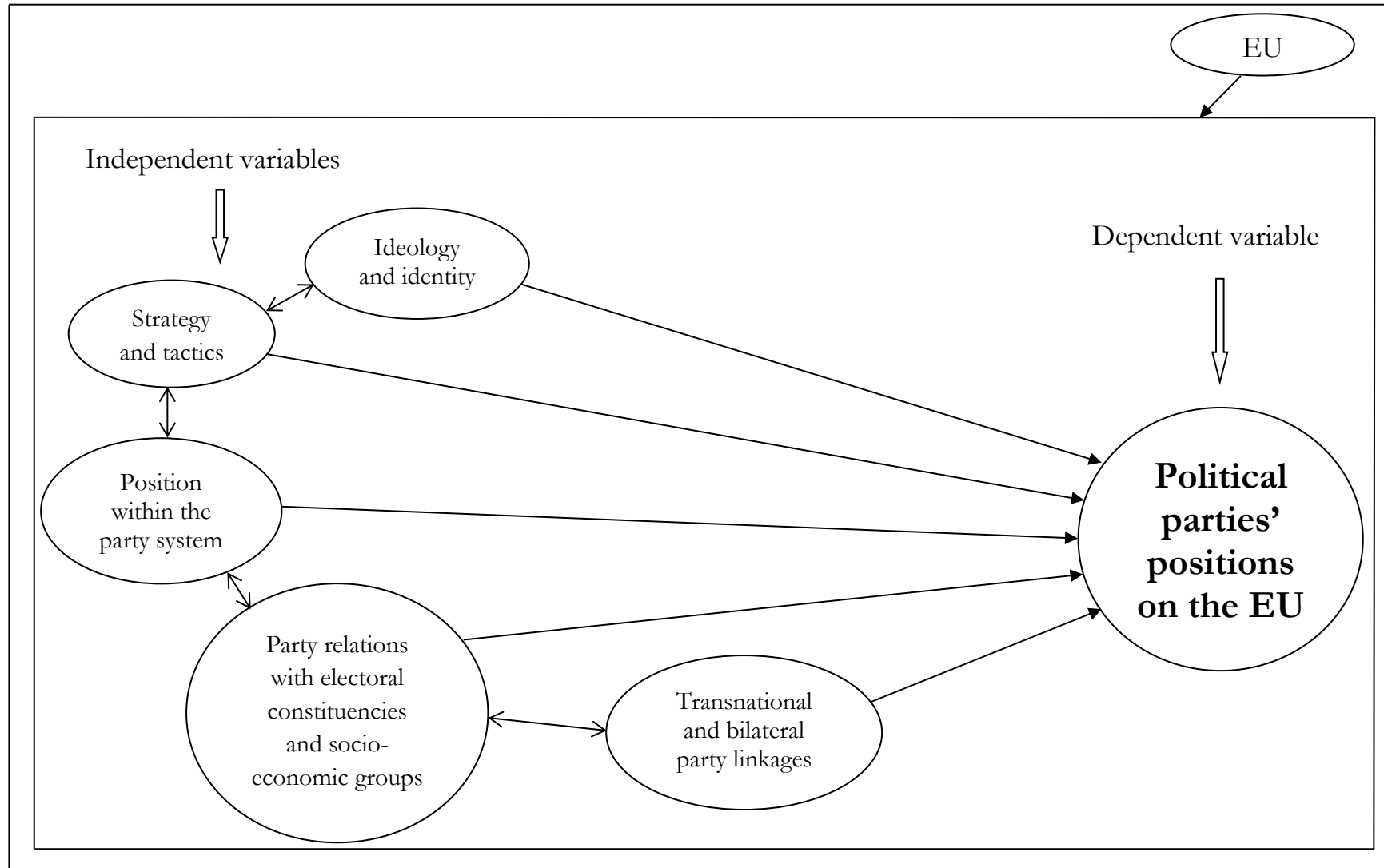
1. party ideology and identity;
2. party strategy and tactics;
3. party position within the party system;
4. party relations with electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups;
5. transnational and bilateral party linkages.

The thesis intends to identify and classify attitudes towards the EU of the relevant parliamentary parties in both countries since 2000. It also aims to understand to what extent party stances on the EU in Serbia and Croatia can be attributed to each of the explanatory factors examined in the context of the complex process of policy formulation, these countries' controversial relationship with the EU and the significant dynamics of domestic party politics in both countries, as discussed in Sections 1.2 and 1.3. The research therefore aims to establish the causal relationship between dependent and independent variables, schematically presented in Figure 1.1, by providing evidence of the impact or lack of impact of the five independent variables on the dependent one. Importantly, it also looks at the interaction between these five independent variables in order to infer their joint causal impact on the dependent one. This research is thus a descriptive and explanatory study. It aims to describe and categorise party stances on the EU (*what* are the party attitudes?) as well as to explain *why* and *how* parties formed and changed positions on this issue. Figure 1.1 schematically presents the initial relation and interaction between the dependent and independent variables.<sup>3</sup> This figure also indicates that the EU is seen as an overall context factor that significantly affects how parties determine and change stances on the EU.

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<sup>3</sup> The observed relation between the dependent and five independent variables is outlined in Chapter 8 (Figure 8.1).

Figure 1.1: The initial relation between dependent and independent variables





The dependent variable – that is, party positions on the substance of European integration is operationalised as: (i) underlying party attitudes towards the general ideas of European integration that underlie the EU; and (ii) underlying party attitudes towards the general practice of European integration – that is, the EU as it is currently and as it is developing (Kopecký and Mudde 2002), which is further discussed in Chapter 2. The research looks at the positions on the EU of fifteen relevant parliamentary political parties, eight Serbian and seven Croatian. It includes all parties in these countries that according to Sartori's (1990) criterion had the ability to affect the direction of party competition. Minor, non-parliamentary parties that do not satisfy this criterion are addressed only in the chapter dealing with peripheral party positions as a driver of their stances on the EU. Although the study generally conceptualises political parties as unitary rational actors, it also examines the dynamic of intra-party relations wherever available data allowed for such an analysis. The research examines party positions within the timescale logically demarcated by important events related to these countries' domestic party politics and their relations with the EU, both of which are the focus of this thesis. There are, namely (i) the 2000 parliamentary elections in both countries that fundamentally changed the nature of their political systems and created conditions for the beginning of their integration into the EU; (ii) the Serbian general election and the granting of EU candidate status in spring 2012, as well as the Croatian general election and the signing of the EU accession treaty in late 2011.

In general terms, the purpose of the research is to test the existing theoretical literature by examining new cases from the European periphery. Therefore, it adopts a deductive approach to the analysis of Serbian and Croatian parties. After reviewing the extensive comparative literature on parties' positions on the EU, the thesis identifies five independent variables and generates hypotheses (see Section 1.7). It then tests the hypothesised relationship between dependent and independent variables. This research focuses on providing evidence (based on the new empirical data collected) to support or challenge theoretical propositions on party stances on the EU developed in the existing theoretical literature. The research design that is employed is a qualitative comparative study. The research explicitly utilises cross-national comparisons aimed at contrasting political parties and their stances on the EU across two cases. As a result, this is a small-N comparative study. The choice of qualitative comparative methodology is the result of: (i) the nature of the research question and the type of empirical evidence needed to answer it, and (ii) the purpose of the research.

The selection of qualitative study is due to the fact that party attitudes towards the EU are essentially qualitative data, which would lose its quality and depth if quantified. Party stances on the EU are shaped primarily by the most senior party officials, who are motivated and influenced by a number of complex factors, none of which can be reasonably quantified. As this research shows, these underlying motivating factors may be deep ideological convictions that are the result of individuals' beliefs, needs or desires. Their motives may also be the result of strategic calculations related to electoral concerns, intentions to secure international affiliations or to become a more 'coalitionable' party of the political mainstream. In other words, party stances on the EU may be deeply rooted in the fundamental beliefs of parties and senior party officials, or the results of carefully planned, pragmatic, strategic positioning. In either case, such decision-making seems inappropriate to be quantified and analysed by methods that privilege quantitative analysis. Given the importance of personal reflection from senior party officials, which essentially represents and determines party responses to the EU within the specific historical context of the cases examined, the study employs a detailed qualitative comparative study.

In addition, the purpose of the research is to test the existing theoretical literature, and a small-N qualitative comparative study is highly suited to do so. Although, unlike a large-N quantitative comparative study, it has limited possibility of generalisation, an in-depth analysis of a small number of party stances on the EU has two key advantages: (i) it can more precisely tease out the causal mechanism at play, and understand the relation between party stances on the EU and the explanatory factors examined; and (ii) it can discern context-specific factors that proved to be rather important in the cases analysed. By focusing on a small number of cases, the small-N comparative research aims for a more sophisticated understanding of causal mechanisms that are too subtle to be observed through the quantitative analysis of a large number of cases (Hopkins 2010). In other words, thick description, although less methodologically sophisticated compared to quantitative approaches, allows for a more complex and nuanced explanation aimed at confirming or refining existing theoretical assumptions. By employing this approach, this research looks at multiple explanatory factors, primarily the way in which independent variables interact with each other as well as their direct impact on the dependent variable.

This research is defined as a small-N comparative study. Yin (2009, p.53) argued that such a comparative study is essentially 'a multiple-case study' due to the depth of the analysis and small number of cases. Accordingly, this research may be seen as utilising 'an

embedded multiple-case design' (Yin 2009, p.46), with political parties being embedded units of analysis within two cases – party systems in Serbia and Croatia – that provide the context for the analysis. In other words, this study is an analysis of two cases based on 'a within-case observation' and it focuses on political parties as 'within-case units' (Gerring 2007, p.21). However, this research also aims to draw a set of 'cross-case' generalizable conclusions. By focusing on these two cases, it expects to provide insight into causal relationships across a larger population of cases (as discussed in Chapter 8). The study is therefore not conceptualised as a single-case study since analytical conclusions independently arising from a number of cases tend to be more powerful than those based on single-case design (Yin 2009).

What is the underlying logic behind the selection of Serbian and Croatian party systems as the cases to be examined? The rationale for choosing these cases lies, *inter alia*, in the fact that they are almost completely under-researched (see Section 1.4), and, as such, they merit an in-depth comprehensive study. Furthermore, these countries share key empirical features that render them suitable for comparative analysis. Both Serbia and Croatia assumed central roles in the former Yugoslavia, experiencing violent conflict following the federation's disintegration. The two countries were (potential) candidates for EU membership and faced a strikingly similar set of challenges, including relations with the ICTY, significant radical right political forces opposing EU membership as well as delayed and difficult democratisation and post-communist transformation due to the nature of authoritarian regimes in both countries throughout the 1990s.

Nevertheless, there are some variances in these two cases, most notably a different level of integration with the EU. Unlike Serbia, Croatia successfully pursued its EU membership bid, experiencing related political and economic transformation. The important difference also lies in the relative stability of Croatian and high volatility of Serbian party system (see Chapter 5). Significantly, Croatia solved crucial statehood issues in the late 1990s, while Serbia struggled with outstanding national issues well into the 2000s, crucially impeding its EU accession. These factors, therefore, provide a rich comparative basis for this analysis and allow for the discernment of the causal mechanism under investigation, that is, why and how parties formed their positions on the EU.

However, the case selection did not only rely on the empirical features of these cases. Rather, this study applied the purposive selection procedure, and the cases were selected

because of the way they were situated within a population of possible cases (i.e., European countries and their party systems). Specifically, the purpose of this research (theory testing) has an important bearing on case selection. In principle, testing existing theories requires peculiar cases that should be different from those on which the current literature based its postulations. New and specific cases are needed to assess the widespread application of these assumptions. Overall, the existing literature relevant to this research has examined the parties of Central and Eastern European countries and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe. Serbian and Croatian cases present a stark contrast to other European states, readily allowing for the testing of existing theoretical propositions. Their specificity can be attributed to the fact that they were latecomers to the process of EU integration, complex relations with the EU (for instance, Western intervention in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 and the EU's unofficial policy of isolating Croatia in the 1990s), the prevalence of statehood and identity issues, and the long-term negative impact of the post-Yugoslav wars (see Sections 1.2 and 1.3). Thus, examination of cases with these characteristics and 'specificity' is needed to show whether and to what extent existing general theory needs refining or holds true in the new and different circumstances.

Moreover, this study aimed to identify cases that 'provide variance along the dimension of theoretical interest' (Gerring 2007, p.88). The selected cases thus exhibit a significant variation in both the dependent and independent variables. With regard to the dependent variable (i.e., party stances on the EU), there was a whole range on different party positions on the EU in these countries (see Table 2.2). Similar variation existed in the majority of independent variables. For instance, all relevant Croatian parties were members of European transnational parties, whereas the majority of Serbian parties did not have any international affiliations. While there was a wider political consensus on Croatian EU membership, such unanimity did not exist in Serbia, enabling ruling/opposition and core/periphery parties to express significant Euroenthusiasm or Euroscepticism (see Chapter 5). These features of the examined cases thus allow inferring the mechanism at play, i.e., how the independent variables impacted the dependent one, as well as to 'predict similar results and anticipate reasons that would predict contrasting results' (Yin 2007, p.54).

Finally, the cases were chosen primarily following 'the logic of the extreme case method selection', as defined by Gerring (2007, p.101). Cases were thus selected because of the extreme values of the dependent and independent variables. The study draws on the logic

that looking at unusual or extreme, rather than typical, cases more readily allows for greater understanding the causal mechanisms (Gerring 2007). Specifically, these cases were not typical cases containing a typical set of values or a typical causal relation. Instead, they were rather ‘unusual’ cases and it is ‘the rareness of the values’ that makes them valuable against the backdrop of the majority of other cases that are more typical (Gerring 2007, p.102). For instance, hard party-based Euroscepticism is a relatively infrequent phenomenon in the political core of European countries. Accordingly, such Euroscepticism may be better studied by looking at cases where it is politically relevant and strong than where it is politically marginal and weak. The former cases are more unusual and may therefore provide more data allowing deeper understanding of this phenomenon. The Serbian case is thus utilised in this research since it appears to be extreme or unusual in this respect given its significant party-based Euroscepticism until the late 2000s. Similarly, a rapid and fundamental transformation of mainstream parties’ attitudes towards the EU is a rare occurrence in contemporary party systems in Europe. Serbian and Croatian cases are thus unusual in this respect owing to the fundamental and rapid shift of stances on this issue as expressed by some major political parties across both countries (see Chapter 4). Consequently, these cases are addressed in this study.

### **1.6.1 Methods of data collection**

Party positions, including those on the EU, cannot be observed directly and, as Bakker et al. (2012) argued, researchers must rely on party material or behavioural evidence to infer their stances. This evidence may be collected using a number of quantitative and qualitative methods. The most widely used methods in the comparative literature include: analysis of what parties say their positions are in programmatic documents and election manifestos (quantitative or qualitative content analysis), conducting surveys of country specialists who are asked to interpret party stances (with or without quantifying their answers), observing how parties behave in parliaments (that is, which legislative proposals they support) or interviewing politicians in order to examine their positions. The choice for a certain method of data collection is the result of the nature of the research question, the type of data needed to answer the research question and the chosen research design. This research thus explicitly draws on qualitative data due to the essentially qualitative nature of party stances on the EU as well as the research design – that is, a small-N qualitative comparative study, as discussed above. Although it uses some quantitative data, such as election results and voters’ stances on the EU, it does not employ statistical analysis other than in simple

descriptive terms. The research therefore utilises primarily a qualitative analysis of party programmatic documents and semi-structured elite interviews to collect data. Each of these methods has particular advantages, but also some drawbacks. This section first discusses the positive and negative aspects of quantitative methods and explains why they are not used in this study, followed by an examination of the qualitative methods on which the study does rely.

Party responses to Europe have been widely studied using quantitative methods of data collection, primarily by conducting expert surveys (Ray 1999; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2007; Steenbergen and Marks 2007; Hooghe et al. 2010; Bakker et al. 2012; Benoit and Laver 2006) and a quantitative content analysis of party documents (Budge et al. 2001). Expert surveys have been extensively used in the comparative literature. Their key advantage is that such quantitative data on party stances on the EU are generalisable across a large number of cases, and thus appropriate for theory generating. The results of expert surveys also appear to be reliable and valid (certainly more than qualitative content analysis) when cross-validated with alternative sources of information about party positions (Bakker et al. 2012). Moreover, numerous scholars who analysed the quantitative data collected by expert surveys produced a number of plausible theoretical assumptions about party responses to Europe (Hooghe et al. 2002; Marks et al. 2006; Marks and Steenbergen 2002).

However, there are a number of problems with this method and the data it generates. It is questionable to what extent it is methodologically justified to convert qualitative experts' judgements on party stances into the quantitative information provided by these surveys. It is especially problematic that these surveys – for example, Benoit and Laver (2006), quantified expert' responses on party stances on the EU in a form of ratio data (on a scale from 0 to 20), given that both party positions and experts' stances on the party positions are fundamentally qualitative data. This raises the issue of whether a given quantifier has the same meaning in different national contexts? Similarly, it is not clear on what indicators experts assessed party positions on the EU, which begs the question of whether this data is essentially comparable. In other words, did country experts base their assumptions on party programmatic documents, public speeches of party leaders, interviews conducted with party officials or on their general knowledge about these parties?

Crucially, data obtained in this way do not say much about the reasons behind party stances on the EU, and neither do they provide the context that would supply the reasoning

behind parties' adoption or change in their stances. Admittedly, scholars, using this data (Hooghe et al. 2002; Marks et al. 2006; Marks and Steenbergen 2002), did examine party ideology as a driver of their responses to Europe. They argued for party ideology as the single most important causal factor that determines party stances on the EU. However, this assumption may be the result of the chosen method of data collection. Specifically, they found it easier to quantify party ideology and thus focused on it. At the same time, they disregarded other potentially significant drivers that cannot be easily quantified and obtained through expert surveys, such as transnational party relations, relations with socio-economic groups, position in the party system or parties' strategic considerations. In other words, scholars utilising expert surveys cannot look at the interaction between explanatory variables and only examine a limited number of quantifiable factors. As a result, they may overlook the factors that cannot be quantified and therefore may reach biased conclusions.

On the other hand, other scholars (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, 2008b) used expert surveys qualitatively – that is, without attempting to quantify country experts' judgements. This approach seems to be more justified when assessing qualitative party responses to Europe. It allows for an assessment of more potentially significant variables (including those that are essentially non-quantifiable) as well as their interaction. As a result, a more complete general observation about party stances on this issue, including a detailed assessment of peculiar individual cases, can be achieved using this method. This research acknowledges the importance of experts' opinions on party positioning on Europe in general. However, it does not rely on expert surveys (due to the shortcomings outlined above) and rather conducts a number of interviews with country experts. These interviews provided very useful contextual information and, importantly, allowed for verification of the key thesis findings. The authors' judgements are tested by interviewing country experts, but also officials of the EU and European party federations responsible for Serbian and Croatian parties.

Similarly, this research does not conduct a quantitative content analysis of party documents. This method has a number of limitations and does not appear to be suitable for discerning party responses to Europe. Due to the same reasons discussed above, extracting party positions from their programmatic documents and quantifying them does not provide any insight into motives behind party stances or the contexts in which these positions were adopted. In other words, the sole observation of a party mentioning the EU does not give us any information on the factors that are behind such stances, and it may

only reveal the salience of this issue for a party specifically during the election campaign (if party manifestos are examined). The most extensively used Manifesto Research Group/Comparative Manifestos Project (Budge et al. 2001), which does quantitative content analysis of parties' election programmes does include Serbian and Croatian parties. It quantitatively measures both positive and negative party references on Europe and their ideological positions across time. However, focusing exclusively on party manifestos that are adopted in the context of electoral competition does not always reveal parties' real positions. As Ray (2007, p.16) argued, the manifesto may be advertising and parties may not be expected to adhere to every line in their manifestos; at the same time, they may be prone to an exaggeration of policy differences or a proliferation of vague or unrealistic promises. In addition, some parties tend to avoid the EU as a topic in manifestos for strategic electoral reasons or make too-general references to European integration, which is particularly the case in (potential) candidate countries. Other party programmatic documents, primarily party programmes, may uncover (if qualitatively assessed) more about parties' positions since they are usually adopted outside electoral competition. Finally, as a result of the mechanistic and statistical approach to fundamentally qualitative data, this method does not always provide empirically reliable data. For instance, the Comparative Manifestos Project (Budge et al. 2001) identified that the hard Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party had a positive attitude towards the EU in its 2008 manifesto, despite the party's outright rejection of Serbian EU membership and opposition to the EU as such.

Finally, this research does not largely examine voting in parliament as a source of information. Although this may provide qualitative data and contextual information, Benoit and Laver (2006) were right to note that political systems characterised by very high levels of legislative party discipline are not suitable for this method. In both cases analysed in this study, coalition governments are the norm and members of such cabinets 'bound together by collective cabinet responsibility are likely to vote in the same way, despite having different policy positions' (Benoit and Laver 2006, p.106). Similarly, they argued, all members of a diverse opposition parties would most likely vote in a unified way and against the government, despite potentially significant political differences between them.

In summary, quantitative measures of party attitudes towards the EU may be misleading and may not provide insight into the real motives behind party positions. This research, therefore, employs methodological triangulation and uses three qualitative methods to gather data. These are namely:



1. qualitative analysis of party programmatic documents (party statements, election manifestos) and political speeches of representative party leaders;
2. semi-structured elite interviews;
3. analysis of the secondary sources and academic literature on the cases examined.

Both qualitative content analysis of party documents (Batory 2002, 2008a; Henderson 2008; Szczerbiak 2008) and elite interviewing (Krašovec and Lajh 2009; Szczerbiak and Bil 2009; Konitzer 2011) are well established and widely used in the comparative literature as a method of data collection. In order to directly examine the stances on the EU among party elites, some authors also surveyed politicians, mostly parliamentarians (Alexandre and Jardin 1996; Baker et al. 1999; Baker and Seawright 2000). However, these approaches have a number of limitations. The most important one that relates to both a qualitative content analysis and interviewing is that they are greatly subjective. In other words, they rely on the author's judgements and assessment of party stances on the EU in their programmatic documents and public statements, as well as the author's interpretation of the interviews conducted with senior party officials. The author has therefore attempted, as far as possible, to cross-validate these judgements by interviewing a number of country experts and officials of the EU and European transnational parties that represent authoritative sources of information, and by using the relevant secondary sources.

As stated above, the data was first gathered by a detailed qualitative examination of Serbian and Croatian political parties' programmatic documents. The study looked at different types of documents adopted over time in order to capture the underlying party stances present in all of them as well as to address the problem with focusing only on party manifestos. It analysed the content of party programmes, manifestos, electoral campaign documents (such as brochures, posters and pamphlets), as well as public statements of senior politicians and party leaders. The statutes and other relevant documents of European transnational parties were also qualitatively analysed. The main limitation of this method was that some parties did not explicitly state their stances in the programmatic documents. That was particularly the case with party positions on the substance of the European integration and the principles underpinning the process of European integration; however, their stances on their countries' EU membership were much easier to detect in all examined documents. For example, the hard Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party adopted the programme that did not contain any references to the EU, although this was a crucial feature of the party's politics. Data collected this way was therefore complemented by

information gathered through other means, primarily elite interviewing. Interviews were also used to prevent the negative impact of the author's subjectivity when interpreting party documents, which is the main drawback of a qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis proved to be an important source of data for assessing the impact of some independent variables. Specifically, party programmatic documents were mostly used:

1. to identify parties' ideology, and locate their positions on both the socio-economic left-right and traditionalism-cosmopolitanism axes accordingly;
2. to assess the direct effect of the linkages with European transnational parties – i.e., programmatic transformations that may have been result of requirements of European party federations.

The second key source of data was 47 interviews with political elites (26 in Serbia, 14 in Croatia, 7 in Brussels) conducted by the author. Elite interviewing as a method of collecting data has a number of advantages. Richards (1996), for example, argued that elite interviews provide information which may not be recorded elsewhere, help researchers to interpret documents and reports, and secure an insight into party internal affairs. Johnson and Reynolds (2008) noted that elite interviewing provides a more comprehensive and complicated understanding of political phenomena than other forms of data collection. Elite interviews are particularly useful in studying political behaviour as they primarily 'provide information on understandings, opinions, what people remember doing, attitudes, feelings and the like' (Vromen 2010, p.258). As such, this method of data collection is therefore highly suited for this research due to its focus on parties and their leaders' attitudes towards the EU.

However, elite interviewing also has a number of weaknesses. The first issue is the extent to which politicians' stances can be seen as a reflection of party stances. Benoit and Laver (2006) thus argued that politicians' perceptions of party policy positions can be intensely coloured by their private political perspectives. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2001) similarly asserted that although useful in tracing factional conflict and explaining backbench dissent, data gathered through elite interviewing does not necessarily accurately represent the party's overall position on European integration. Anticipating this issue, the author conducted as many interviews as possible with senior party officials from the same party (in most cases, between two and four interviewees from individual parties). Moreover, the politicians interviewed have different positions within the party (e.g., party presidents or vice presidents, international secretaries, members of the presidency and political council,

and MPs), which allowed for capturing parties' wider and underlying positions on this issue. The second potential problem with elite interviews is the reliability of interviewees and the validity of interviewee's statements. Harrison (2001) noted that information obtained through interviews may be inaccurate and unreliable because interviewees may wish to present themselves in a positive light or due to memory lapse. Jonson and Reynolds (2008) similarly argued that interviewees may give evasive answers. This research project therefore heavily relies on content analysis of party programmatic documents as well as secondary literature to verify the data collected through interviews. In addition, data obtained through personal interviews were corroborated with statements of other interviewees in order to confirm the validity of interviewee's statements. Moreover, respondents' statements were also checked for internal consistency in order to arrive at valid conclusions.

Given the nature of the research and the data needed to answer the central research question, the author conducted semi-structured interviews. This type of elite interviews has two key advantages. Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews do not draw on a standardized questionnaire with a formal set of questions asked in the same way and sequence, thus generating quantifiable data. Rather, semi-structured interviews allow respondents to explain their beliefs and feelings, and they primarily generate qualitative data. As Harrison (2001) noted, these interviews permit an understanding of the 'whys' and 'hows' as well as the 'whats' since the interviewer seeks the clarification and elaboration of answers. Thus, semi-structured interviews permit researcher to probe and focus on specific aspects of relevant issues. In other words, the author's decision to conduct semi-structured interviews was based on the intention to grasp the interviewees' personal attitudes and interpretation of parties' attitudes towards Europe without constraining them through a standardised set of formal and fully structured questions.

Moreover, while unstructured interviews assume the form of 'a free flowing conversation' (Harrison 2001) due to the lack of any strict set of questions, during semi-structured interviews, interviewers do pose a limited number of more formal and structured questions to each interviewee. As a result, semi-structured interviews may generate comparable information, thus presenting another methodological advantage of this technique. In this study, respondents were asked the same set of key questions about their stances on the EU (see Appendix 2 for questions), allowing for a comparison of their responses. However, the author also asked a number of context-related questions important for understanding the

respondents' specific positions on the EU. Each interviewee was therefore asked questions tailored to his/her specific role in the party or some peculiar feature of the party analysed. For example, the researcher asked Serbian politicians questions about the recognition of Kosovo as a precondition for EU accession. Similarly, senior politicians of the Croatian Democratic Union and the Democratic Party of Serbia were probed on their parties' peculiar relations with European transnational party federations. Finally, the author redesigned or reworded some of the questions in response to new lines of inquiry that emerged during the interviews, which is another advantage of less formalised interviews.

Selecting interviewees constitutes one of the most significant challenges of elite interviewing (Harrison 2001; Burnham et al. 2008; Jonson and Reynolds 2008). In this study, the purpose of the research dictated the list of interviewees (see Appendix 1). As the author sought to understand the motives behind party responses to Europe in Serbia and Croatia, he interviewed: (i) officials of 16 political parties (9 in Serbia and 7 in Croatia), (ii) experts on Serbian and Croatian party politics, and (iii) officials of the EU and European transnational parties. The author primarily sought to interview senior party officials that possessed information vital for understanding party responses to the EU. The respondents were: (i) high-ranking officials that had significant influence on the general decision-making within examined parties, (ii) officials directly involved in the process of formulating (or changing) party policies towards the EU, and (iii) party officials that also served as state officials directly responsible for these countries' relations with the EU. Thus, respondents included party presidents and vice presidents, international secretaries, spokespersons, presidents of the party parliamentary groups, MPs, and members of the party presidencies and political councils. They proved to be highly relevant informants given that some of them were also senior state officials, such as the president and vice president of the Serbian parliament, a chairman of the Serbian parliament's European integration committee, a chair and members of the joint parliamentary committee EU-Croatia, a former state secretary of the Croatian ministry of European integration as well as former ministers of justice in Croatia and for Kosovo in Serbia. Furthermore, country experts consisted of established political analysts and authoritative commentators on political events in both countries. Finally, officials of the EU and European transnational parties were chosen according to their close links with, and direct responsibilities for, these two countries' EU integration and political parties.

In order to identify the most relevant interviewees, the author primarily used ‘snowball’ or ‘referral’ sampling techniques (Burnham et al. 2008). Key informants were first interviewed (such as foreign policy advisors to the Croatian president and the vice presidents of a number of Serbian parties). These key informants then provided the names of potential interviewees; the majority of these individuals volunteered this information, but others were directly asked for referrals. This technique was particularly effective in Croatia due to the relatively small number of people who constituted the political elite and the density of their interconnections. However, there was no evidence of similar interconnections within the Serbian political elite, thus rendering the ‘referral’ sampling technique less effective. The author did not encounter any significant difficulties in obtaining an access to interviewees. The only exception was a group of radical right parties in Serbia as these parties tend to be more suspicious about the purpose of research projects. Consequently, personal connections were utilised in order to obtain access to members of the Serbian political elite on the radical right pole.

The respondents were contacted either through emails explaining the purpose of the research or, in most cases, phone calls. With an exception of a senior official of the European Commission, none of the interviewees requested anonymity. However, five respondents requested to review the transcripts of their interviews. A tape recorder was used in all but one case where respondent did not want to be recorded. The majority of interviews were conducted in Serbo-Croatian, allowing respondents to speak in their native language, and thus fully expressing their complex and changing stances on the issue. This also permitted an in-depth study of interviewees’ responses as well as deeper understanding of the motives behind their stances. The author, a native speaker of Serbo-Croatian, translated the interviews into English.

The semi-structured interviews with party representatives, which turned to be the most important source of data, served two purposes. First, the aim was to gather data that was vital for the project but which was not readily available in written sources, such as the characteristics of intra-party relations or the existence of party factions based on different attitudes towards Europe. Interviews thus provided valuable, first-hand data that supplemented the data collected through assessment of written records. Second, given that the research dealt with political attitudes and opinions, it was of crucial importance to obtain personal contact and conduct face-to-face, individualised and semi-structured interviews with senior politicians in order to analyse their (and their parties’) positions. A

choice to conduct a semi-standardised form of interviews was based on the intention to grasp the interviewees' personal attitudes and their interpretation of parties' attitudes towards Europe, without constraining them through a standardised set of formal and fully structured questions. The interviews with party representatives thus gathered data concerning:

1. party and party leadership attitudes towards the EU, their countries' EU membership, and the political and economic conditions for EU membership;
2. party ideology and identity. This was done by asking interviewees to describe their party ideology, and by assessing interviewees' stances on the role of the state in economy, national identity, sovereignty, democracy and traditional values;
3. party decisions regarding the EU that may be characterised as strategic. Party officials were specifically asked to provide personal explanation and narratives of the events that may be interpreted as the strategic positioning of their parties in relation to potential coalition partners and the subsequent alteration of attitudes towards the EU;
4. party relations with core voters and socio-economic groups;
5. patterns of parties' transnational linkages and their effect on attitudes towards the EU.

Furthermore, country experts, political analysts and journalists were also interviewed. The rationale for these interviews lies in the fact that they usually possess valuable information that is often hidden or not easily accessible through other sources. Specifically, some parties examined in this thesis tend to hide, or at least not publicly state, the real motives behind politically sensitive decisions, such as fundamental changes of their policies or the nature of their relations with financial lobby groups and foreign governments. As a result, country specialists, as 'insiders' that closely follow party politics in these countries, provided significant additional information on these issues. The specific purpose of these interviews was thus to confirm and verify the data obtained through analysis of party documents and interviewing senior politicians. Country experts therefore provided relevant data and personal interpretation concerning:

1. the underlying motives for the formulation and shifting of some party positions on the EU;
2. the nature of party ideology and identity;

3. party realignment regarding Europe in connection to their position in the party system, election performances and post-election coalition building;
4. party relations with economic and financial lobby groups, organised economic interests as well as Western governments represented by their ambassadors to Serbia and Croatia;
5. the dynamics of internal relations within party establishments (intra-party politics).

Data was also gathered through interviews with the officials of the European Commission and European transnational party federations<sup>4</sup> responsible for Serbian and Croatian EU integration and their parties' membership in European party federations, as well as with MEPs, including the European parliament's special rapporteur for Serbia. The purpose of these interviewees was threefold. First, the aim was to gather impartial, first-hand data on how parties examined, adopted and changed the positions on European integration. These officials represented authoritative and reliable sources and were in a position to objectively evaluate the nuances in party attitudes towards the EU. Second, they provided some of the most useful data on the patterns of Serbian and Croatian parties' transnational relations and the consequences of this for their policies and stances on the EU. Third, these interviews were also used to verify data obtained through interviewing senior party officials and an analysis of party documents.

Finally, the research also draws on secondary academic literature and evidence collected from a variety of additional sources. These are, namely: the mass media, official documents of state institutions (electoral commissions, national parliaments, the Serbian EU integration office and Croatian ministry of European integration), public opinion research agencies and non-governmental organisations (Medium Gallup, Strategic Marketing, Eurobarometer, CESID, GONG<sup>5</sup>) as well as articles and books on the EU published by senior party politicians. Secondary data (both qualitative and quantitative) was, therefore, primarily used:

1. to classify party stances based, *inter alia*, on their voting record on European issues in the national parliaments;

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<sup>4</sup> The European People's Party, the Party of European Socialists, and the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party. The European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR) changed its name and became the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE Party) in November 2012.

<sup>5</sup> CESID- Centre for free elections and democracy, GONG- Citizens organized to oversee voting

2. to examine the links between parties' responses to Europe and the stances of their electoral constituencies (by looking at data on core voters' preferences regarding Europe);
3. to analyse the impact of party position in the party system on responses to the EU (by analysing data on party electoral performance, a sharp decline or increase of popular votes and the dynamics of parties' governmental and opposition roles).

## **1.7 The structure of the thesis, hypotheses and major findings**

The following section sets out the structure of the thesis and provides a summary of the hypotheses and major findings. As explained earlier, a detailed examination of the relevant existing literature and the rationale for the hypotheses is presented in the thesis' central chapters that deal with the five explanatory variables (Chapters 3 to 7). This section therefore provides a preview of the hypotheses and explains how they map onto the thesis' chapters and its key findings.

The second chapter presents the most extensively used models for the classification of party positions on the substance of the European integration. It critically reviews these concepts and points to the challenges in their application in the context of EU (potential) candidate countries. This chapter then proposes a model for mapping party attitudes towards the EU that draws on the existing theoretical literature and classifies individual Serbian and Croatian parties' stances into the four categories: soft and hard Eurosceptics as well as soft and hard Euroenthusiasts.

The third chapter examines in great detail party ideology and identity as a driver of their stances on the EU. After reviewing the extensive comparative literature on party ideology, this chapter puts forward the following hypotheses: (1a) The more parties express a socio-economic radical right or radical left ideology, the more likely that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes; (1b) The more parties express a TAN (traditional/authoritarian/nationalist) based ideology, the more likely that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes (compared to parties closer to a GAN (green/alternative/libertarian) pole); and (1c) Parties that belong to the radical right, radical left or green ideological family tend to be more Eurosceptic, whereas liberal, Christian democratic and social democratic families tend to be more Euroenthusiastic. In order to test these hypotheses, the chapter first identifies the ideological underpinnings of Serbian and Croatian parties by looking at their origin, policies and stances on key issues as well as their membership in transnational



party organisations. It then classifies party ideologies into party families and positions parties along the two dominant dimensions of party competition in these countries (the socio-economic left-right and the traditionalism/nationalism-modernism/cosmopolitanism dimensions). The chapter attempts to map party attitudes towards the EU onto their ideologies, aimed at assessing to what extent, and in what way, party stances in Serbia and Croatia were ideologically driven. Although Serbian and Croatian parties had generally loose ideological underpinnings, the thesis argues that a party's ideology was the single most important source of motivation for a response to Europe in the majority of these parties. This is due to the specific nature of European issues, related to identity and statehood issues, in the context of these post-communist and post-conflict societies. As a result, the key driver of party position was a party's location on the dominant dimension of party competition between nationalism (nativism) and cosmopolitanism.

The fourth chapter looks at party strategy as a factor that may determine their views on the EU. It specifically generates the following four hypotheses after reviewing the existing literature: (2a) The more parties perceive that the interests of their supporters are in line with European integration, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes; (2b) The more that parties attempt to broaden their electoral base and rely on the 'catch-all' electoral strategy, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes; (2c:) The more that parties' political competitors 'occupy' the Eurosceptic space, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes; and (2d) The more that parties seek to be 'suitable coalition partners' for pro-European parties in order to come to power, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes. This chapter therefore seeks to demonstrate how these parties determine and change stances on this issue in relation to strategic incentives stemming from domestic party systems, namely the logic of electoral competition and post-election coalition formation. It finds that some of the core parties underwent a fundamental ideological transformation, which included as its most visible element the full shift of stances on the EU, from hard Eurosceptic to soft Euroenthusiastic. This volte-face was a strategically driven response to internal and external incentives in the context of dynamic electoral competition and strong EU presence in (potential) candidate countries, and aimed at maximising their chances of securing executive office. The key strategic factors were the perceived beneficial effects of EU integration for party voters, disincentives to compete in the Eurosceptic space that was already 'occupied' by stronger political competitors and aspirations to become 'suitable coalition partners' for dominant pro-European parties.

The fifth chapter seeks to determine whether party position in the party system drives stances on the EU. It looks at how party involvement in government and being in opposition as well as in core and peripheral positions within the party system were related to party responses to European integration. The chapter proposes and tests the following hypotheses: (3a) The longer that parties are in opposition, the more likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes; and (3b) The more that parties are positioned towards the periphery of their party system, the more likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes. In addition, this chapter examines the actual characteristics of party systems in Serbia and Croatia, assessing whether the specific nature of these post-communist and post-conflict party systems and their types of political parties created incentives or disincentives for parties to develop positive or negative sentiments towards the EU. This chapter argues that a party's position in the party system was generally not the significant driving force behind underlying party stances on the EU. However, it also finds that opposition status significantly contributed to the adoption of a Euroenthusiastic political agenda of a group of strategically motivated former Eurosceptic parties.

The sixth chapter seeks to understand whether parties determine attitudes towards Europe in response to preferences of the general public, electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups. It does so by testing the following three hypotheses proposed after reviewing the scarce literature on this issue: (4a) The more that the general public opinion is Eurosceptic, the more likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes; (4b) The more parties' electoral constituencies are Eurosceptic, the more likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes; and; (4c) The more socio-economic groups (financial and lobby groups, trade unions, non-governmental organisations and national churches) are Eurosceptic, the more likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes. Unlike other chapters, the sixth chapter utilises mostly qualitative data on public opinion and core voters' stances on the EU. It aims to examine whether parties in Serbia and Croatia responded to the fluctuating preferences of other domestic actors when determining stances and formulating policies on the EU. The chapters argues that in most cases there was no direct link between party and public/core voters' stances on the EU and that parties tended to ignore public and core voters' preferences on this issue. This was primarily due to weak and unarticulated impulses coming from the public and core voters, which left considerable space for parties to manoeuvre.

In contrast to previous chapters that deal with domestic factors and thus draw from literature on the domestic politics of European integration, the seventh chapter examines external drivers of party positions on the EU. It specifically seeks to understand how and to what extent party linkages with European transnational party federations, foreign national parties, EU institutions and ambassadors affected the attitudes of Serbian and Croatian parties. This chapter tests the following two hypotheses: (5a) 'The stronger the parties' linkages with European transnational parties and national parties from EU member states, the less likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes; and (5b) 'The stronger the parties' linkages with EU institutions and foreign governments, the less likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes. It examines the nature of these linkages in a systematic manner by employing the concept of direct and indirect impact of the EU. This chapter argues that parties' transnational and bilateral linkages in most cases did not have a direct effect on party attitudes towards the EU. However, these factors may explain strategically driven pro-EU stances of a group of parties that strongly aspired to break away from the long-term international isolation, establish contacts with mainstream European parties and join one of the European party federations. Their key motivation was to obtain European legitimacy and crucial participation in government, given the significant veto power of these external actors in EU candidate states.

Finally, the eighth chapter discusses the key general findings of this research and formulates the overarching arguments. Apart from revisiting the effects of the five individual variables, this chapter examines the interaction between these factors and how their combined impact shaped party views on the EU. It does so by schematically drawing the model that explains the observed relations between the dependent and independent variables. This chapter argues that party ideology and, under specific circumstances, party strategy were the factors that decisively influenced the formation of their stances on the EU. Other independent variables generally proved to be of secondary importance, since their effect was mostly mediated through party ideology and strategy. The concluding chapter also draws implications for the comparative literature from the Serbia and Croatian cases and proposes avenues for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Conceptualisation and categorisation of the positions of Serbian and Croatian parties on the EU**

Before turning to the factors that may have determined party responses to Europe, this chapter seeks to conceptualise and categorise the attitudes of Serbian and Croatian parties towards the substance of European integration. This is, however, a challenging task, given the dynamics of these party systems and the resultant changing nature of parties' stances on this issue. Moreover, many parties in these countries have never clearly expressed opinion on the principles that underpin the process of European integration and the EU as a supranational organisation. Instead, they perceive the EU predominantly through the prism of political conditions for their countries' EU membership. On the other side, the comparative theoretical literature (Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Conti 2003; Flood and Usherwood 2007; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, 2008b; Kaniok 2012) has been characterised by an ongoing scholarly debate on the key classification criteria as well as the most appropriate terminology that should be employed to depict all the nuances in party responses to Europe.

This chapter critically reviews the most extensively used classification models and points to the challenges of their application in the context of (potential) EU candidate countries. Although the post-Yugoslav experience made Serbia and Croatia somewhat different, they were not specific enough to allow a fully new categorisation of party stances. The chapter, therefore, does not aim to develop a new concept, but to categorise party positions based on the available data, by adapting the existing frameworks. It thus proposes a model for mapping party attitudes towards EU that draws on the comparative theoretical literature and initially classifies individual Serbian and Croatian parties into the four distinct categories: soft and hard Eurosceptics as well as soft and hard Euroenthusiasts. The chapter is structured as follows. It first outlines the most important conceptual models for the categorisation of party stances on the EU. It then critically reviews these frameworks and addresses the key challenges in their application in different national contexts, with a particular focus on (potential) candidate countries. This is followed by an elaboration of the logic behind the model applied in this thesis. Finally, individual Serbian and Croatian parties are initially classified according to the proposed concept.

## 2.1 Conceptual models in the comparative literature

The most widely used model of party-based Euroscepticism was developed by Szczerbiak and Taggart, who broke this position down into hard and soft Euroscepticism. The first term initially implied ‘*a principled opposition to the EU and European integration* and therefore can be seen in parties who think that their countries should withdraw from membership, or whose policies towards the EU are tantamount to being opposed to the whole project of European integration as it is currently conceived’ (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, p.2; emphasis added). The second term initially referred to a party position ‘where there is not a principled objection to the European integration or EU membership, but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas leads to the expression of *qualified oppositions to the EU*, or where there is a sense that “national interest” is currently at odds with the EU trajectory’ (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, p.2; emphasis added).

This concept was later extensively applied in a number of case studies, but it was also adapted by scholars who sought to capture specific features of individual party systems. Henderson (2008, p.279), for example, added one more degree of Euroscepticism, termed ‘phoney Europhile’, in order to characterise Slovak parties that were strategically in favour of Slovakian EU membership, but whose ideology and acts demonstrated hostility to the European integration project. Conti (2003) also used the concept of hard and soft Euroscepticism to examine Italian parties and introduced three additional attitudes that a party may adopt. He specifically proposed a neutral category, defining it as lack of a clear position on European integration, and then conceived the two pro-European stances labelled as functional and identity Europeanism. The former position was characterised by a strategic interest and context-based support, while the latter described an identity- and ideology-driven support for European integration. Rovny (2004), on the other hand, reconceptualised Euroscepticism in terms of two scales, the first one addressing its magnitude and the second its motivations. Rovny argued that the magnitude could be seen as a continuum between soft and hard Euroscepticism in ordinal, rather than nominal, terms (as Szczerbiak and Taggart conceptualised). He asserted that the central point separating the two sides was the question of whether a party expressed principled opposition to the EU and thus advocated withdrawal or non-accession.

However, the framework of hard and soft Euroscepticism has also received criticism. Kopecký and Mudde (2002, p.300) argued that ‘soft Euroscepticism is defined in such a

broad manner that virtually every disagreement with any policy decision of the EU can be included' and that 'the criteria that are used both to connect and to separate the two forms of Euroscepticism remain unclear'. Henderson (2008) similarly noted that soft Euroscepticism became a broad, catch-all category that encompassed both mainstream government parties that have been successful in pursuing their states' ambitions to join the EU, such as the Hungarian Fidesz or the Czech Civic Democratic Party, and some extremist parties, such as the Greater Romania Party and the Slovak National Party. Flood and Usherwood (2007, p.3) also asserted that soft Euroscepticism was a too broad category since 'there is scarcely any political party which does not object to some feature of the EU as presently constituted'. More importantly, Kopecký and Mudde (2002, p.30; emphasis added) also argued that these categories 'do not do enough justice to the subtle, yet important, distinction between *the ideas of European integration*, on the one hand, and *the European Union as the current embodiment of these ideas*, on the other hand'.

In response to this criticism, Szczerbiak and Taggart abandoned the idea that attitudes towards a country's EU membership should be viewed as the ultimate litmus test of whether a party belongs to a hard or soft Eurosceptic camp. They reconceptualised the model by using two more precise criteria to categorise Eurosceptic parties. These were: (i) underlying party attitudes towards the European integration process as embodied in the EU; and (ii) attitudes towards further actual or planned extensions of EU competencies. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b, p.248; emphasis added) consequently argued that hard Euroscepticism is '*principled opposition to the project of European integration as embodied in the EU*, based on the ceding or transfer of powers to supranational institutions such as the EU'. Also, it appears that hard Eurosceptic parties would also express a principled opposition to the current and future extension of EU competencies. In contrast, they stated that soft Euroscepticism exists when there is not principled objection to the European integration project of transferring powers to a supranational body such as the EU, but there is '*opposition to the EU's current or future planned trajectory* based on the further extension of competencies that the EU is planning to make' (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b, p. 248; emphasis added).

Drawing on the criticism of hard-soft Euroscepticism dichotomies, Kopecký and Mudde (2002) proposed a concept that covered both pro- and anti-EU positions. They introduced a distinction between support for *the ideas of European integration that underlie the EU* (institutionalised cooperation on the basis of pooled sovereignty and an integrated liberal

market economy) and *support for the EU as it is in reality* (the general shape and development of the EU's political, institutional and social elements). They further made a distinction between Europhiles and Europhobes based on their support for, or opposition to, the ideas underlying European integration as well as between EU optimists and EU pessimists, based on party attitudes towards the EU as it is in reality. As a consequence, Kopecký and Mudde constructed the four ideal-type categories of party positions on Europe. Euroenthusiasts thus combine Europhile and EU-optimist positions and support both the general ideas of European integration and the EU as it is. Eurosceptics express Europhile and EU-pessimist positions – they support the general ideas of European integration but are pessimistic about the EU as such. Eurorejects adopt Europhobe and EU-pessimist attitudes and oppose both the ideas underlying the process of European integration and the EU as it is in reality. Finally, Europragmatists mainly combine Europhobe and EU-optimist positions as they do not support the general ideas underlying the EU, but support the EU.

An alternative concept was proposed by Flood and Usherwood (2007). It is a typology based on the different degrees of support for or opposition to EU integration in general, or some aspect of it. Their framework covers a full range of party attitudes towards Europe, from maximalist – in favour of pushing integration as far and as fast as is feasible – to rejectionist – characterised by an outright refusal of integration, coupled with an opposition to participation. Moreover, they identified a spectrum of more nuanced attitudes towards Europe between the two extreme poles. On the positive side, these authors found reformists who endorse the advancement of integration subject to remedying the deficiencies of what has already been achieved, and gradualists that accept some slow and piecemeal advance of integration. On the negative side of the continuum, they identified minimalists that accept the status quo but want to limit further integration, as well as revisionists, who want to return to an earlier state.

In summary, Kopecký and Mudde, and Szczerbiak and Taggart appear to have arrived at essentially the same conclusion about the criteria based on which parties should be classified (although it is important to note that Szczerbiak and Taggart dealt exclusively with Eurosceptic parties). Drawing on their arguments, the first criterion is party support for or opposition to the original ideas underlying the EU – that is, the principle of ceding national sovereignty to supranational bodies, such as the EU. The second criterion is party support for or opposition to the EU's current or expected future trajectory – that is, the planned further extensions of EU sovereignty. Both criteria should be thus used to identify

broad, underlying party positions on what Szczerbiak (2008, p.225) termed, ‘the substance of European integration project’. In this way, these two concepts are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. This, however, does not mean that these authors classified the same parties in the same way. Different mapping of party positions on the EU is partly due to the different methodological approaches they employed as well as inherent difficulties in applying these models in specific national contexts, but also different interpretation of empirical data, which is further discussed in the following section.

## **2.2 Challenges of applying conceptual models to (potential) candidate states**

This section points to the difficulties in applying the classification models in the context of EU non-member states, namely the lack of demonstrated party stances on the substance of the European integration. It also addresses the issue of whether party stances on EU membership are an indicator of their broad, underlying positions on the EU. The section also elaborates the combination of models applied in this thesis as well as why some typologies are regarded as unsuitable for this analysis.

Although well regarded and widely used in different national settings, the major issue with the concepts of Kopecký and Mudde (2002) and Flood and Usherwood (2007) is the fact that they are based on the assumption that parties expressed nuanced and highly differentiated positions on the EU. However, in reality it is very difficult, especially in non-EU member states, to clearly differentiate between party ‘support for the general ideas of European integration that underlie the EU’ and ‘support for the EU as it is and as it is developing’ (Kopecký and Mudde 2002, p.300). It is particularly difficult to identify party stances on the general ideas underlying the EU, namely the ceding of national sovereignty to supranational bodies. Political parties (even in EU member states) often do not have and do not express any specific model of the EU that they want to achieve, nor are they aware of deficiencies in the existing model, as required by Flood and Usherwood’s typology. Parties in EU candidate countries focus almost exclusively on the issue of EU membership, above all political preconditions for joining the EU (Gulmez 2012; Stojić 2013).

This was recognised by Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b, p.246), who argued that both typologies require ‘a lot of data in order to categorize broad underlying party positions with the degree of precision that is required to fully operationalize them and this kind of information is often not available’. They further noted that this was a particularly serious



challenge in Central and Eastern European countries, where it was difficult to identify a party's stance on either European integration through the EU in principle or on the EU's current trajectory, because most of them did not articulate, or have not even considered them. Parties in candidate states, they explained, tended to view EU integration almost exclusively through the prism of accession negotiations and the kind of 'deal' that their country was likely to be offered. They specifically pointed to the case of two Polish parties (the Polish Peasant Party, and Law and Justice) that did not say anything about the principles of European integration and the current or future trajectory of the EU. Kopecký and Mudde nevertheless classified these parties according to their stances on these two issues.

Flood (2009) responded to this by arguing that Szczerbiak and Taggart exaggerated the difficulty and that this should not prevent proper party classification. Furthermore, Szczerbiak and Taggart themselves appeared to disregard this problem in their later work. Specifically, their initial model was easier to operationalise and employ in individual cases. The main methodological advantage was the assumption that party positioning on EU membership was a key variable determining party attitudes, given that most parties clearly expressed stances on this issue. Their re-conceptualised model offered more precise criteria for party classification, but in turn faced the same problem they noted in the alternative models: the lack of elaborated party positions on the EU. Szczerbiak (2008), for example, faced difficulties classifying Polish parties according to their principled or contingent opposition to the project of European integration as embodied in the EU. Szczerbiak (2008) asserted that this was due to the fact that they had simply not gone into the detail required in order to be able to categorise them in this way. These parties, he argued, decided to focus virtually all their critique of the EU on the conduct of the accession negotiations. Crucially, Szczerbiak posed a question about the possibility of comparing Euroscepticism across a wider Europe, if the lack of data about party attitudes towards the substance of European integration was present in all European states. In contrast, Kopecký and Mudde (2002) did not encounter this problem when examining parties' stances on the EU in Central and Eastern Europe. They specifically adopted a broader approach that entailed looking at a number of indirect indicators, i.e., party stances on other related issues, in order to categorise their positions on the EU. These scholars thus examined parties' ideologies, stances towards neighbouring countries and globalisation, their transnational relations or the policies regarding the EU that these parties implemented.

This thesis addresses the issue of the general lack of elaborated party positions on the EU by employing methodological triangulation. It categorises party stances by identifying (wherever available data allowed) their direct, rather than indirect, attitudes towards the EU in a number of sources. In other words, the thesis examines party programmatic documents, the rhetoric of senior politicians and party elites interviews to discern what parties directly argued about the ideas of integration that underlie the EU (ceding sovereignty to supranational bodies) as well as the EU as it is and as it is developing. It is assumed that using more sources and methods of data collection would result in more direct information on party positions on these issues, and consequently more precise classification. This is also in line with Mudde's (2011, p.11) argument that the lack of data was 'mostly an effect of the selection of party literature', since most authors worked predominantly on the basis of official party literature, most notably with election and party programmes. Moreover, even though parties may not say anything about the principles of European integration and the current/future trajectory of the EU in their documents or may not use it in their rhetoric, it does not necessarily mean that they do not have a stance. This may indicate that some parties choose not to give prominence to these issues, while senior politicians may have strong beliefs. Nevertheless, in some cases it was impossible to identify these nuances in party positions on the EU. As a result, the focus of the study is on the drivers of party responses to Europe (i.e., whether party positions were predominantly ideologically or strategically motivated), rather than on the precise distinction between these two types of support for or opposition to the EU.

Another contentious issue in the comparative literature is how integral party positions on EU membership are to their broad attitudes towards the EU? Do underlying party positions on the EU remain constant over time, despite shifting of attitudes towards their countries' EU membership? Can a party's stance on EU membership be a reliable indicator of party positions in candidate countries given that EU debate is dominantly centred on this issue? As Szczerbiak (2008, p.240) argued, 'party attitudes towards whether or not their country should be a member of the EU are not necessarily emblematic of a party's broad, underlying policy on European integration and can be more the product of an instrumental cost-benefit analysis or short-term tactical-strategic calculations'. This is in line with Kopecký and Mudde's (2002) arguments, which classified some parties (such as the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia) as Euroreject, although they have not categorically ruled out EU membership.

Conversely, being in favour or against EU membership was an important (in some cases, critical) political issue at the early stage of EU accession for countries where there was not a wider political consensus on joining the EU (primarily in the Western Balkans).<sup>6</sup> In addition to this, there was the common lack of any informed political debate about the substance of the European integration, as well as general ignorance of the principles underpinning the EU; this was widespread even among political elites in some candidate countries. Examining party positions on EU membership appears, therefore, to be justified (and only possible) in parties that have not considered the substance of the European integration. This was primarily the case of parties in (potential) candidate countries with a distant prospect of joining the EU and generally demonstrated the lack of consensus on the process, where the debate on the EU was couched in terms of their EU membership. However, party stances on EU membership are not an ultimate indicator of broad, underlying party positions on the EU. As accession advances, with the EU becoming more than an issue of pure abstraction, it is more likely that parties will adopt more informed and nuanced positions on the substance of European integration. More importantly, as the accession negotiations accelerate, parties may start using the issue of EU membership strategically and politicise it in response to electoral incentives, particularly in the run-up to EU accession referendums. This is most likely to be the case with parties that express strategically driven responses to the EU. This thesis, therefore, looks at party stances on EU membership as some indicator of their broad positions on the EU, but primarily in the early phases of their countries' EU accessions.

The thesis does not utilise Flood and Usherwood's (2007) model, which is effectively inapplicable in the cases of non-member states given that it requires the most nuanced party stances on a number of different dimensions of the EU and European integration. This framework is more suited to Western European parties, whose countries have a long history of being in the EU and consequently are more likely to have developed stances on the EU than those in Central and Eastern Europe. The thesis, in contrast, draws on the logic behind the Kopecký-Mudde's model and re-conceptualises Szczerbiak-Taggart's; it examines parties' stances on both the ideas of European integration and the EU as it is, in order to classify their positions. However, it does not employ the four-fold typology that was proposed by Kopecký and Mudde. This is due to fact that in order to classify individual parties into four distinct categories, direct party positions on both issues need to

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<sup>6</sup> In this respect, some of the Western Balkan countries (particularly Serbia) were different from other Central and Eastern European states where, due to the consensus on joining the EU from the very beginning, debate on EU membership did not constitute such an important political issue.

be unambiguously identified. Their definition of support/opposition to the general ideas of European integration was particularly problematic, since it was couched in rather West European terms (although they used the concept to account for differences between parties in Central and Eastern Europe). Moreover, as Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b, p.244) noted, a Europragmatic category of parties that are opposed to European integration in principle, but supportive of the further deepening of integration project, appears to be illogical.

Szczerbiak and Taggart's (2008b) model draws on the same criteria to categorise parties and consequently may result in the same challenges of obtaining data. However, these two models are essentially based on different logic. Kopecký and Mudde mapped parties based on the distinction between their positions on ideas of European integration that underlie the EU and the EU as it is in reality. These authors were not too concerned with the motives behind party positions and their model does not reflect the varied drivers of different party responses to the EU. They admittedly did suggest that a party's support for the general ideas of the EU is mostly ideologically driven, whereas strategy can play an important role in explaining a party's support for the EU as it is. Nonetheless, this distinction does not underpin their model and it rather appears to be the consequence of the party classification.

On the other hand, the underlying logic of Szczerbiak and Taggart's (2008b) model is that (Euro sceptic) party stances in both dimensions can be principled or contingent, which may be implicitly understood as ideologically or strategically driven (since these authors did not explicitly argue so). Szczerbiak and Taggart thus categorised parties primarily according to the motives behind their positions on both the ideas of European integration and the EU as it is. In other words, the focus was on the fundamental nature and drivers of party stances, rather than on the precise distinction between party positions on these two dimensions. Given that this thesis aims to identify the key characteristics of party stances and to discern the motives behind them (and the employed concepts should serve that purpose), it utilises Szczerbiak and Taggart's model to classify Euro sceptic parties. By the same token, positive stances on the EU are examined by using Conti's (2003) and Rovny's (2004) adaptation of Szczerbiak and Taggart's concept.

### 2.3 The classification model

After outlining different conceptual frameworks, this section elaborates the model employed for mapping party stances on the EU, which amends and combines the existing conceptual frameworks (Table 2.1). The thesis draws upon the reformulated Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) model to categorise Eurosceptic parties, Conti's (2003) framework to map Euroenthusiastic stances as well as Rovny's (2004) elaboration of the motives behind individual party positions. It argues that party attitudes towards the EU are essentially qualitative data that would lose its quality and depth if quantified (see Chapter 2). Therefore, the model consists of ordinal categories of party positions. It depicts different degrees of enthusiasm for European integration as well as opposition to it, while the precise distance between different categories is not specified.

Table 2.1: Model of party positions on Europe and their underpinnings in (potential) candidate countries

Sources: Adapted Conti (2003)/Rovny (2004)/Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b)

<b>Hard Euroenthusiasm</b>	<b>Soft Euroenthusiasm</b>	<b>Soft Euroscepticism</b>	<b>Hard Euroscepticism</b>
<i>Principled pro-integration position</i>	<i>Contingent pro-integration position</i>	<i>Contingent anti-integration position</i>	<i>Principled anti-integration position</i>

The thesis looks at parties' principled and contingent, negative and positive broad, underlying attitudes towards the substance of European integration. As a result, this model classifies parties into the four categories: hard and soft Euroscepticism as well as hard and soft Euroenthusiasm. Drawing on Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b), hard Euroscepticism is defined as principled opposition to both the general ideas underlying the process of European integration (primarily cooperation among European states by ceding their sovereignty to supranational bodies) as well as principled opposition to the EU's current or future planned trajectory. Hard Euroenthusiasm is, consequently, conceptualised as principled support for both elements that constitute the substance of European integration. Finally, soft Euroscepticism and soft Euroenthusiasm are defined as contingent opposition to and support for these principles, respectively.

Factors that may determine party stances on Europe will be addressed in great detail in the following chapters; here it is important to note the distinction between ideologically and strategically motivated party positions that underpins the model. The thesis argues that

both hard and soft positive and negative positions on the EU may be ideologically or strategically driven. It draws upon Rovny's (2004, p.35) argument that 'parties are expected to act more or less ideologically or strategically and their programmatic stances are expected to be more or less strategically or ideologically driven'. As a result, Rovny (2004, p.35) claimed, 'purely ideological or purely strategic considerations are unlikely to occur in reality, but can be understood as extreme ends of a motivation continuum'. Party position on the EU would depend on whether a party is more policy-seeking or office-/vote-seeking (Muller and Strom 1999; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b), but it is also the result of the interplay between these two motivations in the specific national contexts.

In most cases, policy-seeking parties would formulate ideologically motivated positions on the EU, particularly if the general ideas of European integration run deeply counter to or are fully in accordance with the party's fundamental values. Similarly, parties that are office-/vote-seeking, by nature would mostly form strategically driven positions on the EU (as on any other political issue) with a view to maximising electoral support.<sup>7</sup> However, there is no linear relationship between the inherent nature of parties and the drivers of their stances on the EU. In other words, parties that are generally ideologically driven may adopt strategically motivated responses to the EU. This may be explained by the logic of the domestic party systems and strong electoral incentives to adopt an electorally profitable stance on the EU, irrespective of embedded ideological values. In particular, this may be the case if the principles underlying the process of EU integration do not constitute the core values of these parties. As a result, such ideologically driven parties may be indifferent to the EU or prone to strategically respond to it. In contrast, stances on the EU may be an element of the basic beliefs of some otherwise weakly ideologically rooted parties, provided that parties adopted rudimentary basic principles. Such strategically driven parties may take up an ideologically motivated position on the EU. This may be seen as a consequence of the nature of EU issues in particular national contexts, which may create disincentives for such parties to exploit this issue despite intrinsic drives to do so. This is the case when the significance of EU-related issues, particularly in (potential) candidate countries, challenges the most fundamental convictions of all political parties, including those that do not draw deeply on fundamental principles, and compels them to react ideologically.

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<sup>7</sup> There are however parties whose position on the EU may be determined by what they perceive to be the interests of their supporters. This is not necessarily the same as ideology (which involves reference to some more or less abstract set of values) or strategy (which involves considering the likely response of the parties' voters or potential voters).

Following this logic of the model and drawing on the existing theoretical concepts, a hard Eurosceptic category is conceptualised as principled opposition to the values underpinning the process of European integration as well as the EU as it is and as it is developing. These parties explicitly favour an international, rather than supranational, form of cooperation among sovereign nations and oppose the ceding or transfer of powers to supranational institutions such as the EU and an integrated liberal market economy. They also express a principled opposition to the current and future extension of EU competencies as well as consistent opposition to their countries' EU membership. In most cases, this is the position that parties adopt when motivated by their ideological convictions. Underlying principles of EU integration may run counter to such parties' original ideological positions and fundamental identity values. As Rovny argued (2004, p.36), 'the particular values and normative political goals vested in the initial ideology are at odds with some values, normative goals, or particular policies of the European integration project'. These parties are not likely to compromise on this issue and moderate their stances, even if the logic of party competition or an overwhelmingly pro-EU electorate creates incentives to do so. They are therefore not expected to change their negative position on Europe over time, although they may sometimes moderate rhetoric for strategic electoral reasons. Hard Eurosceptic positions can be also strategically motivated. Such parties find it electorally profitable to advocate this position, although their ideologies do not necessarily have to be counter to the principles of EU integration – or if they lack any elaborated ideologies. Rovny (2004, p.45) found that some Central European parties, which he termed populist (such as the Polish Law and Justice Party and Self-Defence, as well as the marginal Coalition for Republic-Republican Party of Czechoslovakia) are inclined to hard Euroscepticism that is strongly strategically driven.

Hard Euroenthusiasts express principled support for the substance of European integration. This category resonates with what Conti (2003, p.18) termed 'identity Europeanism' – i.e., parties that consider European integration as good in itself. In most cases, these are ideologically motivated positions (although they can also be strategically driven). In other words, the EU integration process is 'not presented in terms of costs and benefits upon the domestic arena or upon the party itself' (Conti 2003, p. 18). The fundamental principles of these parties are in line with the values underpinning the process of EU integration: they are committed to the closest cooperation among European nations and the transfer of power to supranational institutions. They strongly and consistently support their countries' EU membership as well as fulfilling all preconditions for EU

accession in candidate countries. These are parties that advocate and support the EU even at the price of losing out – for example, despite growing Eurosceptic sentiments in the public or their core electorate. As Rovny (2004, p. 35) pointed out, they would accept ‘losing voters at the cost of pursuing specific value based ends’ that the EU embodies.

On the other side, soft Eurosceptic parties express contingent opposition to the project of transferring powers to a supranational body such as the EU, as well as further extension of EU competencies. These parties also tend to oppose their countries’ EU membership ‘under current conditions’, but not in principle. In most cases, these are strategically driven positions. In other words, soft Eurosceptic parties may express qualified opposition to the EU and a country’s EU accession in order to secure more votes and in response to the concerns of their core electorate or the general public about the EU. These parties primarily react to incentives coming from the public and the logic of domestic party politics (such as coalition building and the positioning of other parties on this issue). Their approach to the EU is therefore tactically and context-driven, and couched in instrumental terms, primarily on a cost-benefit analysis of the expected benefits for voters or the party itself (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b). In most cases, these are generally not deeply ideologically rooted parties. As such, their policies on the EU are prone to changes as a reaction to these external challenges. As Rovny (2004) argued, they are willing to amend their programmes by more or less Eurosceptic positions and discourses in the hope of gaining new voters and greater political influence, even at the cost of abandoning some of the parties’ original fundamental principles. This, however, may also be an ideologically motivated position. For example, Rovny (2004, p.40-41) argued that some parties in Central Europe (such as the Christian National Union in Poland and the Smallholders’ Party in Hungary) seem to be ‘mildly ideologically driven’ soft Eurosceptics. This may be the result of the fact that ideologies compel these parties to express neither hard Eurosceptic nor Euroenthusiastic attitudes. They are rather predisposed, by their fundamental values, to be consistently ‘cautious’ about EU issues and inclined to critically assess the EU in principle (not to reject it), regardless of electoral incentives.

Finally, a soft Euroenthusiastic position mostly resonates with Kopecký and Mudde’s (2002, p. 303) Europragmatist category of parties that ‘do not hold a firm ideological opinion on European integration, and on the basis of pragmatic (often utilitarian) considerations decide to assess the EU positively because they deem it profitable for their own country or constituency’. Conti (2003, p.17) argued that this is ‘functional



Europeanism' which describes parties that express strategic, rather than principled, support for the EU or their countries' EU membership. They are not committed to further integration unless it is proved that it would serve other, more important interests, such as maximising votes. Conti argued that conditional supports for European integration (and EU membership) are sensitive to contextual factors and these parties therefore can experience shifts according to contextual interest. However, soft Euroenthusiasm may also be an ideologically motivated stance of parties that are not predisposed by their ideology to strongly support the EU, nor to oppose it. They critically assess the EU in principle, but also lean in favour of supporting the EU, irrespective of strategic incentives.

## **2.4 Classification model and Serbian and Croatian parties**

After discussing the principles that underpin the classification model, this section initially maps Serbian and Croatian parties' stances on the substance of the European integration (Table 2.2). It very briefly explains the rationale behind classifying parties in light of the previous discussion on ideologically and strategically driven, positive and negative stances on the EU. Comprehensive explanation of the drivers of party attitudes as well as the positions of individual parties are discussed in great detail in the following chapters, which examine the explanatory factors determining their stances on the EU (Chapters 3 to 7). The wider general implications of the proposed classification of Serbian and Croatian parties are discussed in the conclusion.

Table 2.2: The initial mapping of party positions on Europe in Serbia and Croatia  
*Sources:* Adapted Conti (2003)/Rovny (2004)/Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b)

<b>Hard Euroenthusiasm</b>	<b>Soft Euroenthusiasm</b>	<b>Soft Euroscepticism</b>	<b>Hard Euroscepticism</b>
<i><b>Principled pro-integration</b></i>	<i><b>Contingent pro-integration</b></i>	<i><b>Contingent anti-integration</b></i>	<i><b>Principled anti-integration</b></i>
<b>SERBIA</b>			
- Democratic Party - G17 Plus (United Regions of Serbia) <sup>8</sup> - Liberal Democratic Party	- Serbian Progressive Party - Socialist Party of Serbia	- Democratic Party of Serbia - New Serbia	- Serbian Radical Party - Dveri <sup>9</sup> - <i>Socialist Party of Serbia until mid-2000s</i>
<b>CROATIA</b>			
- Social Democratic Party - Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats	- Croatian Democratic Union	- Croatian Peasants' Party - Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonija and Baranja	- Croatian Party of Rights - Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević - <i>Croatian Democratic Union until early 2000s</i>

Serbian and Croatian parties can be initially grouped into four categories according to their underlying attitudes towards the EU. Starting from a Euroenthusiastic category, five political parties may be classified as hard Euroenthusiasts: the Democratic Party, G17 Plus and the Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia as well as the Social Democratic Party and the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats in Croatia (see Chapter 3). These parties consistently expressed a principled pro-integration position by strongly supporting their countries' EU membership, while some of them also expressed support for European integration in principle. Three core parties may be classified as strategically driven soft Euroenthusiasts: the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union. The central characteristic of these parties is political pragmatism, which prompted their fundamental ideological transformation and shifting of underlying attitudes towards the EU (see Chapter 4).

<sup>8</sup> In 2010, G17 Plus founded and acted as the centrepiece of a coalition of regional parties, the United Regions of Serbia. In April 2013, G17 Plus fully merged into the United Regions of Serbia, transforming it into a political party.

<sup>9</sup> Dveri, the Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonija and Baranja, and the Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević are not examined in this thesis, except in Chapter 5 that deals with peripheral political parties.

Moving to a Eurosceptic category, the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights as well as a number of peripheral parties may be classified as hard Eurosceptic. What characterises these parties is their radical right ideology, which significantly shaped their principled opposition to the substance of European integration as well as to their countries' EU membership (see Chapters 3 and 5). Finally, the Democratic Party of Serbia, New Serbia and the Croatian Peasants' Party may be seen as soft Eurosceptic. Their traditionalist and conservative ideologies predispose them to adopt sceptical attitudes toward the EU and consequent contingent opposition to it (see Chapter 3). The proposed model also depicts the dynamic and changing nature of party stances on the EU across both countries. This is most visible in the cases of two ruling and hegemonic parties of the 1990s, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union, which at that time were distinctly Eurosceptic (although it is debatable whether soft or hard). Yet, both parties experienced a fundamental transformation over the years; together with the Serbian Progressive Party, which underwent an even more dramatic and rapid makeover, they are classified as soft, strategically driven Euroenthusiasts.

This chapter discussed different existing typologies of EU-related positions of political parties. It also elaborated the employed model and the rationale behind combining and amending some, while not drawing on other, theoretical concepts. The chapter argued that despite their idiosyncratic nature, Serbian and Croatian cases were not specific enough to propose a fully innovative categorisation. However, identifying and categorising party stances towards the EU are particularly challenging tasks in (potential) candidate countries. This is due to the general lack of expressed and nuanced party positions on this issue as well as the changing nature of their attitudes towards the EU. As a result, the applied model is conceptualised as simple, clear-cut, ordinal axis of dynamic party stances towards the substance of European integration, ranging from principled support to principled opposition, with the contingent positive and negative stances located between these two poles. This concept is a reflection of the argument that party ideology and strategy are the two decisive drivers of their responses to Europe. It thus enables distinction between the parties, which were to a lesser or greater extent motivated by these factors, depending on their inherent qualities (policy-seeking or office-/vote-seeking) as well as the context of domestic politics. The framework is also general enough to be applied in other (potential) candidate states since it may allow for drawing valid conclusions beyond the cases analysed in this thesis. The following chapters scrutinise the factors upon which individual Serbian and Croatian parties were initially categorised using the proposed model.

### Chapter 3: Party attitudes towards the EU and party ideology

*For me, political power has never been a goal in itself. My interest lies in politics that is guided and determined by the interests of the Serbian people. I consider that it is nationally irresponsible to implement pro-EU policy just in order to remain in power.* (Vojislav Koštunica, leader of the Democratic Party of Serbia referring to Serbian Euroenthusiastic political parties; see DSS 2012a, p.14)

The introductory quote to this chapter reflects well the responses of some Serbian and Croatian parties to the considerable challenges brought about by European integration in these countries. Specifically, the fundamental beliefs of party leaders and a value-based approach to politics in general made some parties rather unwilling to compromise on the issue of 'Europe' and thus unresponsive to strategic incentives coming both from the domestic party system and considerable external pressures. Chapter 3 therefore examines party ideologies as one of the most important drivers of party responses to Europe, which has received considerable attention in the comparative literature. The chapter aims to assess the extent to which underlying party attitudes towards the substance of the European integration in Serbia and Croatia have been shaped by party ideologies and identities. The chapter seeks to answer the following question: is it possible to predict a party's stance on the EU on the basis of its ideology? In doing so, it analyses party positions on the EU in relation to their ideological preferences on the traditional socio-economic left-right dimension, as well as the dominant nationalism/traditionalism vs. cosmopolitanism/modernism axes. It also groups parties into party families. By examining these two former Yugoslav countries, this chapter intends to offer more general arguments and contribute to the debate about the importance of ideology as a factor that may explain how contemporary parties in the context of (potential) EU candidate states respond to European integration.

This chapter argues that ideology was a key factor that determined broad, underlying positions on Europe of the majority of Serbian and Croatian parties. However, it also demonstrates that Serbian and Croatian parties were generally loosely ideologically rooted and mostly office- and vote-seeking. This paradox was the consequence of the specific nature of European issues and how they translated into the party politics of these post-communist and post-conflict societies: parties adopted predominantly ideologically driven

positions on this issue. This chapter also finds that the pattern of support for, and opposition to, the EU essentially reflected the dominant patterns of domestic politics. Specifically, the majority of parties formed stances on the EU based on their attitudes towards identity issues – that is, their position on the dominant nationalism (nativism) vs. cosmopolitanism dimension, while location on the socio-economic left-right axis was less relevant. Finally, the chapter found that adherence to an ideological family created some predisposition for parties to adopt particular attitudes towards the EU, with liberals and social democrats having been more consistently pro-European than the conservative, Christian democrat, agrarian and (particularly) radical right families. However, belonging to a particular family did not prove to be a reliable indicator of party stance in the context of these unsettled party systems.

The empirical focus of this study is on the European stances and policies of thirteen relevant parliamentary parties across both countries. The chapter is structured as follows. It first reviews the comparative literature on ideology as an explanatory factor for party positions on the EU and puts forward the hypotheses to be tested. The second section discusses the general concept of party ideology and identity as well as the nature of party ideologies in post-communist party systems. The chapter then examines the ideological underpinnings of individual parties in Serbia and Croatia. The following, central section of this chapter deals in greater detail with how party ideology impacted parties' underlying stances on the EU. Finally, conceptual and empirical findings in relation to the proposed hypotheses are summarised in the conclusion.

### **3.1 Party attitudes towards the EU and ideology in the comparative literature**

Party ideology and strategy have been identified in the comparative literature as two of the most important factors that impact party responses to Europe. However, there is an ongoing 'ideology versus strategy' debate about the relative importance of these factors in different national circumstances. While some authors argued that ideology decisively shapes party stances, others claimed that parties approach the issue of Europe strategically, with the majority of scholars making the case that interplay between these two variables may best account for party positions on this matter. Moreover, among those who argued for ideology as an explanatory variable, there is debate on the issues of how ideology shapes stances, to what extent socio-economic left-right dimensions of party competition may explain party stances, and can we predict parties' stances based on their party families? The

following section addresses these questions, provides an overview of the existing literature and puts forward the working hypotheses to be tested in the cases of Serbian and Croatian parties.

There is a considerable group of scholars that made a strong case that party ideology shapes party positions on EU issues. Marks and Wilson (2000, p.433) specifically argued for 'a cleavage theory of party response to European integration'. Their key argument is that the response of Western European political parties to European integration is filtered by historical predispositions rooted in the basic cleavages that structure political competition. In other words, the issue of European integration 'is assimilated into pre-existing ideologies of party leaders, activists and constituencies that reflect long-standing commitments on fundamental domestic issues (Marks and Wilson 2000, p.433). They focused on the social democratic, liberal, Christian democratic and conservative party families, and argued that parties' ideological schemas rooted in political cleavages are a 'prism' through which parties come to terms with European issues. These authors concluded that if one wishes to know how a political party will respond to European integration, one must pay close attention to historically embedded predispositions, particularly the ideological propensities and constituency links that arise out of the basic social cleavages.

Based on the same data, Marks, Wilson and Ray (2002) later argued that party family is a stronger causal factor than strategic competition, participation in government or the attitudes of a party's supporters toward the EU. Marks, Wilson and Ray (2002) noted that the most pro-EU oriented party families were the liberal and Christian democratic parties, followed by the social democratic and regionalist families. The agrarian, conservative and green party families were less supportive, while the Protestant, extreme right and extreme left/communist families were the most Eurosceptic. These authors hence claimed that parties assimilate and exploit European issues within existing ideologies, which are the results of key social cleavages that give rise to party families. They concluded that the location of a party on the left-right dimension is closely associated with its position on European integration, and the effect of party family on their stances on this issue is the strongest.

Hooghe et al. (2002, p. 965) further elaborated these assumptions and demonstrated that there is a strong relationship between the conventional left-right dimension and party

positioning on European integration, since West European parties located toward the left and the right extremes are more Eurosceptic than parties oriented toward the centre. However, these authors found that the most powerful predictor of party positioning on Europe is the ‘new politics’ dimension related to communal, environmental and cultural issues, which they operationalised as an axis between two poles, namely the GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) and the TAN (traditional/authoritarian/nationalist). They argued that the GAL/TAN axis exerts a strong, consistent effect on party positioning on European issues and structures party attitudes in the major party families, with the TAN side of the dimension driving the overall relationship. These authors found that parties near the TAN pole (radical right and right-populist) are, without exception, highly Eurosceptic, while conservative parties with a TAN inclination also tend to be Eurosceptic. They also conclude that that extreme left and extreme right parties – and, to a lesser extent, the green parties – share Euroscepticism, while parties in the political centre – including most social democratic, Christian democratic, liberal and conservative parties – are generally much more supportive of European integration. Marks et al. (2006) later examined whether the GAL/TAN model can explain party positioning on Europe both in Western and Eastern European countries. They found that Euroscepticism is prevalent among the same types of parties, namely radical left and radical TAN parties across the continent. However, the opposition to European integration in the East tends to be concentrated among parties that are, at the same time, hard left and hard TAN, whereas Eurosceptic parties in the West are either the hard socio-economic left or hard TAN parties.

Finally, Marks and Steenbergen (2002) looked at how the left-right dimension is related to party competition and stances on the EU, and they presented four possible models. The IR model assumes that the two dimensions are fully independent of each other, since contestation on EU issues has no ideological underpinning. The Hix-Lord model argues that the two dimensions coexist orthogonally, since they are unrelated and cannot be collapsed into a new single dimension given that they crosscut political coalitions. The third model assumes that these dimensions are fused in a single dimension, with the left pushing for common economic regulations, and the right favouring fewer EU regulations. Finally, they argued that the fourth model, which they appear to support, assumes that these dimensions are neither fused together nor orthogonal to each other, and that the various aspects of European integration are incorporated into one of these two dimensions. These authors thus concluded that the left-right and new politics dimensions underlie stances on the EU.

On the other side, a number of scholars contested these assumptions. Gaffney (1996, p.19) claimed, 'the EU can in principle engender allegiance or hostility from any ideological perspective'. Batory (2008a) also argued that the issue of Europe certainly does not confirm to a single left-right dimension in a comparative perspective, while Sitter (2001, p.37) claimed that Euroscepticism emerges as a phenomenon potentially linked to a range of ideologies and that 'it covers a multitude of ideological and interest-driven stances'. Sitter (2001) pointed out that Euroscepticism, as a product of party competition, is driven by party strategy, conceptualised as the party's combined goals of survival, votes, policy and office. This 'strategic' approach to the European integration will be examined further in Chapter 4.

Taggart (1998) similarly argued that placing parties in party families does not allow us to predict with any certainty their position on the EU, since different party families adopt clearly different positions in different countries. He specifically contested that ideology alone can predict party Euroscepticism, arguing the European integration issue sits badly with the usual ways of tracing the lines of political conflict because it cuts across left-right ideological divisions. Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) also emphasised that a party's position on the left-right spectrum is not correlated with whether a party is Eurosceptic or not. Although they identified a stronger tendency for Eurosceptic parties in the Central and Eastern candidate states to be on the right of the spectrum, they argued that parties from different areas of the left-right spectrum express Euroscepticism. Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001, p.21) therefore concluded that Euroscepticism in Central and Eastern Europe draws from a range of party families and 'attempting to lever the "European" issue into a left-right framework is at least difficult and possibly even fruitless'. In their later study, these authors further argued that there is no straightforward relationship between general party ideology and stances on Europe, since 'it is not possible to "read off" a party's position from whatever ideological family it belongs to' (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2008b, p.257).

However, these authors did not claim that ideology is an irrelevant explanatory factor. They rather argued that a combination of ideological and strategic factors best explain party positions on Europe. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) thus suggested that underlying party positions on the issue of European integration are determined by a blend of the party's ideology and what it perceives as the interests of its members. The relative importance of these factors, they argued, is determined by whether the party is more value-based, goal-seeking or a pragmatic, office-seeking party. Batory (2002) similarly claimed that ideology



structures underlying attitudes to integration, but that parties' predispositions are not directly translated into a corresponding policy of supporting or rejecting membership *per se*. She pointed out that parties are limited when forming these attitudes by their own early pro-European rhetoric as well as short-term competitive pressures and the need to be acceptable as coalition partners. Finally, Kopecký and Mudde (2002) made the case that ideology determines a party's support for the general ideas that underlie the EU, whereas strategy can play an important role in explaining a party's support for the EU as it is.

This thesis argues, based on the empirical data examined, ideology is an important factor that, to a great extent, impacts party stances on the EU. In other words, parties find it difficult to disregard their fundamental values (provided they have them) when determining a position on the EU, as elaborated later in this chapter. However, if parties are primarily strategically driven or EU issues do not constitute an important element of their fundamental beliefs, parties may strategically respond to European integration, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Based on the key assumptions from the dominant comparative literature, which posits a strong relationship between ideology and party positions on the EU, this chapter aims to test the following hypotheses about the relationship between party ideology and attitudes towards the EU:

H1a: The more parties express a socio-economic radical right or radical left ideology, the more likely that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;

H1b: The more parties express a TAN (traditional/authoritarian/nationalist)-based ideology, the more likely that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes (compared to parties closer to a GAN (green/alternative/libertarian) pole);

H1c: Parties that belong to the radical right, radical left or green ideological family tend to be more Eurosceptic, whereas liberal, Christian democratic and social democratic families tend to be more Euroenthusiastic.

### **3.2 How to study party ideology and identity?**

The following section addresses the question of how to conceptualise party ideology and identity, which indicators to use in order to identify ideology, how to classify parties according to their ideology as well as discerning the most suitable methodological approach for the comparative cross-country analysis of the ideologies of Serbian and Croatian

parties. To examine the influence of ideology on party stances on Europe, the ideological positions of political parties in Serbia and Croatia first need to be identified. However, the notion of party ideology is difficult to define, given the methodological difficulties discussed in this section. Gaffney (1996, p.4) even asked whether it is possible to identify the 'true' underlying organising principles of political parties, while Mair and Mudde (1998) similarly argued that it is difficult to specify party ideology with any precision. The task of identifying party ideology is therefore not an easy one, particularly in the context of recently established multi-party systems in CEE. In other words, recently founded parties in Serbia and Croatia (for example, the Serbian Progressive Party was founded in 2008) did not have a long tradition and history of firmly established, fundamental ideological principles. Moreover, Serbian parties particularly tended to change political positions in a search for the most suitable and politically cost-effective ideological posture. Therefore, it is questionable whether some of these parties have ideological principles at all, in the sense of a system of fundamental values and ideas that underpins all segments of party policies and constitutes its overall identity.

One of the ways to identify parties' ideologies is to find their common characteristics and construct typologies of parties that exhibit such features. This is the rationale behind the most popular concept of party families (Von Beyme 1985). Party family classification has been widely used in a number of cases and has now become a standard reference point in much of the comparative party literature (Mair and Mudde 1998). It draws on Lipset-Rokkan's cleavage model by making a distinction between nine party families: liberal or radical, conservative, socialist or social democratic, communist, Christian democratic, agrarian or centre, regional or ethnic, ecological or 'new left' and right-wing extremist. This model was later employed or amended by a number of authors (Taggart 1998; Siaroff 2000; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001; Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002).

Other authors identified the dominant lines of social and economic cleavages in societies and the consequent patterns of party competition in different party systems. They then positioned parties along the key dimension of political contestation according to their ideology (Siaroff 2000; Batory 2002). Batory, for example, placed Hungarian parties in the ideological space along two dominant dimensions of party competition: the first between the cosmopolitan and national pole, and the second between the market and social protection pole. Similarly, Marks et al. (2006), in a series of articles, also used this approach

and positioned parties along the left-right and TAN (traditional/authoritarian/nationalist) and GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) axes.

Finally, authors interested in 'EU politics' combined these two approaches. They grouped individual parties in party families and then looked at where the dominant European party families were located along the key axes of political competition at the EU level. Hix (1999) thus focused on socialist, Christian democrat and liberal party families, arguing that there are two dominant dimensions in the EU political space: an integration-independence dimension on pro- and anti-European issues as well as a left-right dimension for libertarian-authoritarian or 'intervention-free market' issues. Taggart (1998) similarly looked at the ideology of party families in order to understand how ideology may shape party-based Euroscepticism. He conceptualised the ideology of party families as two continuums: the first related to identity politics (global vs. national focus for identity) and the second on conflict resolution (individual vs. community/collective).

In order to conduct a cross country and comparative analysis of parties' ideologies and their stances on the EU in Serbia and Croatia, this study employs both methods of comparison: party family classification and placing parties along the dominant axes of party competition. It groups individual parties into party families; however, it acknowledges that these are not fully ideologically profiled parties and that this method may have limited utility in these cases. The analysis therefore takes into consideration that Western Balkan party systems have particular features due to unique political and historical circumstances that have shaped these societies and corresponding social and economic cleavages over the last two decades. In addition, the thesis will argue that the pattern combining two axes – the socio-economic left-right and the nationalism-cosmopolitanism, which generates issues on sovereignty, democracy and national identity – appears to be well suited to explain ideology and the EU stances of Serbian and Croatian political parties. Due to still outstanding or only recently solved national and state-building issues, political parties in both countries primarily competed on the nationalism-cosmopolitanism axis, while socio-economic issues were far less relevant.

### **3.2.1 Criteria for mapping and classifying party ideology**

The key issue arising from these approaches: which indicators should be used to identify party ideology, and to classify parties into families and along the dominant axes of competition, particularly given the rather vague and unsettled nature of parties' ideologies

in these two countries? Von Beyme did not address this issue, given that he was focused on party families rather than on individual parties and whether or not they belonged to a certain family. Nevertheless, the comparative theoretical literature suggests a number of criteria to use in order to group parties according to ideology. Gallagher et al. (1995, p.181) proposed three criteria to distinguish party families in Western Europe: 'genetic' origin, transnational links, and which policies parties pursue. Mair and Mudde (1998) similarly argued for four key indicators based on either the researcher's assessment (party origins and genesis, the congruence of the policies pursued by the parties) or the parties' self-classification (transnational links and party name).

The first criterion, party origins and genesis, is based on the assumption that ideologically similar parties were developed in similar historical circumstances and with the intention of representing similar social interests. This approach examines the original conflicts and cleavages (mainly those of religion, nationalism and social class) that had generated political parties, as well as the socio-demographic characteristics of their core contemporary electorates (Mair and Mudde 1998). This was the approach favoured by Von Beyme (1985), who examined parties' genesis as well as their formative traditional and historical cleavages to classify them into party families.

The problem associated with this approach is that its geographic application may be limited, since it was developed primarily for traditional West European parties (Mair and Mudde 1998). Indeed, Serbian and Croatian parties have a different political tradition as a result of different historical experiences, and most of them were founded under circumstances that were significantly different compared to other European societies. Until the end of the World War I, these nations experienced different socio-economic patterns of development through being parts of various empires for centuries. Croatia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, one of the key European territories in which there were conditions for the emergence and development of Western European-style party pluralism; Serbia, however, was part of the Ottoman Empire, which was in every respect a backward realm without any conditions for the development of a modern civil and political society. Serbian political parties began to emerge in the tradition of European parties only after the creation of an independent Serbian state in 1878. As a result, socio-economic cleavages in both countries took on divergent forms and resulted in different political traditions and cultures, which in turn influenced the formation and genesis of their parties. For example, there has never been a tradition of agrarian parties in Serbia – unlike Croatia, where the

Croatian Peasants' Party was a leading party until the World War II. Also, the fact that these two countries have different prevailing religions, Orthodox Christianity in Serbia and Catholicism in Croatia, greatly influenced the trajectories of political organisations, which is most evident in the absence of any Christian democratic tradition in Serbia.

Nevertheless, both nations were integral parts of the common Yugoslav state throughout the twentieth century. In the inter-war period, Serbian and Croatian parties found themselves in a common political system, although they remained separated, ethnically based, and deeply divided over the concept of a common state (Bulatović 2004). However, the communist dictatorship for nearly half a century after World War II almost completely erased the pre-war political tradition, which led to the loss of connection with the pre-war parties and legacy. Hloušek and Kopeček (2010, p.11) thus argued that the criterion of historical origin was therefore less important than the ideological-programmatic criterion in the former communist countries of Central and East Europe, given the long interruption of party activities during the communist era. Crucially, contemporary political parties in these countries were founded during the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, after half a century of communist dictatorship and at the beginning of the civil war that marked the entire last decade of the twentieth century in the former Yugoslavia. In this sense, the origins of these parties were rather different compared to their Western and even other Eastern European counterparts, which had not undergone the experience of the violent disintegration of a multi-ethnic state. In addition, these were not historically grounded parties, since they have emerged in the last two decades and as such cannot be easily grouped based on the original cleavage model. The thesis therefore argues that while a party's origins and genesis may be some indicator of its ideology, one must also consider the specific circumstances of the analysed countries. It argues that traditional social and political groupings based on the classic political cleavages were distorted in these parties' countries by growing nationalism and the war at the time these parties emerged, and this significantly influenced their initial ideology and membership of party families.

The second criterion examined by Mair and Mudde (1998) is based on an analysis of party policies and stances on key issues in order to identify whether there is congruence between the policies that are professed or pursued by parties belonging to the same ideological family. In other words, an assessment of 'the extent to which the policies pursued by one party in a country are similar to those pursued by another party in another country' (Gallagher et al. 1995, p.181). This may be done by using expert judgments, parliamentary

voting, party survey data or formal policy statements. This thesis argues that this approach, also used by Mair and Mudde, seems best suited to examining party ideology and employs it in the Serbian and Croatian cases. It draws primarily on a qualitative content analysis of party manifestos and other key programmatic documents, as well as on interviews with senior party officials, as discussed in Chapter 1.

The third criterion suggested by the comparative literature is party membership in transnational party organisations. This indicator is based on the actions of parties themselves, given that they decide to join certain party organisations. As such, this is an indicator of parties' intentions to be ideologically positioned and perceived by others in a certain way, rather than of their actual ideological orientation. Nevertheless, the criterion of international links has been established as one of the most widely accepted standards by which to group individual parties into families (Mair and Mudde 1998), assuming that parties will align themselves cross-nationally with ideologically similar organisations (Mudde 2007). Mair and Mudde (1998) argued, however, that the criterion of membership of transnational federations suffers from the problem that many of these federations accept parties too easily, being more interested in the power of numbers than in ideological homogeneity. For example, Hanley (2008) noted this in the case of the European People's Party, whose Christian democratic ideology was diluted by a rapid expansion of party members with conservative, national ideologies in the 1990s. He argued that ideological rigour was no obstacle for this transnational party federation to co-operate with parties that were not Christian democrat, although he also argued that some ideological concessions on the part of aspiring member parties were necessary. Hloušek and Kopeček (2010) similarly emphasised that many parties aspired to membership in the established transnational parties for tactical reasons rather than political self-identification, since it brings political legitimacy in Central and East European states on the domestic political scene. They also found that the influence of membership in European party federations on the party ideological-programmatic profile has thus far been small; they pointed out the ideological flexibility of the European People's Party, which included Christian democratic, conservative and liberal-conservative parties. These authors nevertheless used this as an auxiliary indicator in their analysis of party ideology in five central European states.

Conversely, Pridham (2008, p.100) identified ideological compatibility as one of the key conditions placed by transnational party organisations on parties interested in membership of European party federations and argued that it had 'served to produce formal but also

real changes in party positions and behaviour'. Moreover, in contrast to the heterogeneous nature of the European People's Party, it appears that other transnational parties had a more rigid approach to aspiring members. The Party of European Socialists was often seen as more demanding in terms of membership conditions, including ideological ones, which seems to have been strictly enforced. For example, the Serbian Democratic Party's former international secretary, Miloš Jevtić (Interview 2011), argued that this party federation applied very rigid monitoring and closely scrutinised this Serbian party with respect to whether it was ideologically eligible for membership.

In general, the intention of European transnational parties to enlarge and to have at least one relevant, mainstream party from each European country appeared to be a key incentive for accepting national parties, regardless of their ideological compatibility. In turn, national parties often chose to join certain party federations due to similarly practical reasons (as will be discussed in Chapter 7). International affiliation thus seems to be a consequence of strategic assessment and political calculations, rather than ideological and political closeness to their European counterparts. This factor may also be problematic because a large number of Serbian parties have not yet become members of transnational federations, although they have often established their intention to join one of these organisations, which may be some indicator of their ideology. In summary, although international party affiliation cannot be automatically translated into ideological orientation, this study employs it as an additional, rather than principal, criterion. It is especially useful in cases where it is difficult to determine the ideology of parties that combine elements of several ideological positions.

Finally, the fourth criterion discussed by Mair and Mudde (1998) is the name of a party, which does not appear to be a reliable indicator of party ideology. Parties across both examined countries adopted a variety of different names that were in no way related to their ideological predispositions and identities. How, for example, to classify G17 Plus or Dveri (the Doors) and what do the names of the Democratic Party, Democratic Party of Serbia or Croatian Democratic Union say about their ideologies? In addition, according to party names in these countries, they all strongly adhered to democracy, given that 'democratic' was the most popular term, although it does not say anything about their actual policies and identities. Nevertheless, some party names do reveal their ideological underpinnings, such as the Croatian Peasants' Party. Also, the fact that some parties

refused to call themselves ‘party’, but rather ‘movement’, may reveal a great deal about their ideological self-perception.

In summary, this analysis uses a number of criteria to assess and classify the ideologies of Serbian and Croatian parties. It first looks at party origin and genesis, understood in the peculiar context of the former Yugoslavia. Specifically, instead of simply using the classic Lipset-Rokkan model of social cleavages, it considers the genesis of the Serbian and Croatian parties in the context of the violent disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. The study then assesses a variety of party documents aimed at identifying how parties articulate key stances and policies, and discerning the values that underlie party programmatic documents and statements. Finally, international party affiliation is used as an additional criterion.

The study draws heavily on official party documents, which is an approach preferred by Mudde (2007). A content analysis examines key party documents over a relatively long and politically very dynamic period, which allows for a substantial assessment of parties’ key policies and ideological predispositions as well as tendencies to change and adapt them. In other words, the study aims to demonstrate the deeper ideological values that have been present in all relevant party documents over time. However, the thesis also argues that party documents are not the same as party ideology. They are often strategic documents that are shaped by certain political context and sometimes do not indicate the real motives and underlying principles behind party policies. Therefore, a content analysis of party programmes is supplemented by data obtained through personal interviews with senior party officials. The interviewees were asked to term and describe the ideological position of their parties and to express their attitudes towards issues that may indicate party ideology, such as the role of the state in the economy, including issues of social distribution, economic inequality and levels of state regulation. Party ideology was also evaluated by asking questions regarding sovereignty, democracy, human rights, national identity and traditional values; this aimed at assessing whether a party is more so characterised by national or cosmopolitan orientations. Crucially, the findings of this chapter were also triangulated with interviews with country experts and specialists, who were asked to characterise ideologies and stances on the EU expressed by these parties (see Chapter 1). Identifying party ideologies is one of the key contributions of this thesis given the lack of any systematic, comparative study of the ideological underpinnings of Serbian and Croatian parties in the existing literature.



Finally, the thesis employs a qualitative, cross-national analysis of party ideologies based on the assumption that party ideology and identity are a set of values and ideas, created and represented by the party leadership and members, which permeate all its policies and positions. Therefore, party ideology can be most comprehensively analysed qualitatively, through direct interviews with senior party officials who can express their fundamental attitudes and values, as well as through a qualitative content examination of official party literature. In other words, the study argues that quantitative approaches, primarily quantitative content analysis and expert surveys, are not well suited for the study of party ideology (nor for their stances on the EU), as discussed in Chapter 1. It seems that the complex and changing nature of party ideology cannot be captured and completely assessed by quantitative coding of party manifestos as done within the Manifesto Project (Budge et al. 2001) or by quantifying expert responses (Hooghe et al. 2002). The rigid form of expert survey may not detect all value-based elements of a complex party identity. Also, unlike a quantitative analysis of party documents, which can only mechanically and superficially indicate the ideological orientation of parties, a qualitative content analysis may examine the essential foundations of parties, and therefore make sense of, and provide a broad context for, the statements set forth in party documents.

### **3.3 The ideologies of Serbian and Croatian political parties**

After discussing the different methods of identifying and classifying party ideologies, the next section aims to identify the ideologies of Serbian and Croatian parties and categorise them accordingly, taking into consideration the methodological and empirical limitations discussed in the previous section. There are six broad party families in these countries: social democrat, conservative, Christian democrat, agrarian, liberal and radical right. This section also examines party stances in relation to two dominant dimensions of party competition: socio-economic left-right and nationalism-cosmopolitanism axes.

#### **3.3.1 Social democratic parties**

Although both countries had rich left wing political traditions and were faced with a difficult socio-economic transition, which was fertile ground for the emergence of left wing parties, the socio-economic left remained scarcely populated. However, it is important to note that almost all parties in these countries expressed some leftist socio-economic stances in their programmatic documents; an economic left-right division was not clear-cut and was rather subsumed by other dominant cleavages (related to identity and statehood

issues). Nevertheless, the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia were the only relevant parties that could be categorised as socio-democratic in Serbia, despite the emergence of a number of small, non-parliamentary parties that claimed to be social-democratic, but which rapidly vanished over the years (the Social Democratic Union, Social Democratic Party of Serbia, and Social Democratic Alliance). On the other hand, the Social Democratic Party of Croatia was the uncontested major left-wing political force in that country. All three parties may be seen as close to the left socio-economic as well as the modernism pole, since the 2008 reorientation of the Socialist Party of Serbia.

The Democratic Party was founded in 1990 as a liberal centre-right party whose programme was based on the concept of a liberal market economy and economic freedoms. The party was in favour of full liberalisation of the economy, which included the elimination of all restrictions on private initiatives as well as the unrestrained development of markets for goods, with a minimal role for the state (Vukomanović 2007). Vukomanović (2007) also noted that it was the only relevant party in Serbia that explicitly mentioned capitalism as a political goal, given that its 1992 programme stated the party as being for real capitalism, with wide participation of citizens. However, after coming to power in 2000, the then-party leader, Zoran Djindjić, decided to strategically shift the party's ideological basis and adopted social democratic principles. EPP's MEP, Doris Pack (Interview 2011), a close friend of Djindjić, claimed in an interview that this party changed ideology because Djindjić wanted to join the Party of European Socialists due to the fact that this was the strongest grouping in the European Parliament. Senior party official Zoran Alimpić (Interview 2011) revealed in an interview that Djindjić's decision to apply for membership in the Social International and the Party of European Socialists came as a surprise even to senior party officials. Stojilković (2011), on the other hand, argued that the party's ideological reorientation was a result of the calculation that the left political spectrum was unoccupied by a strong, relevant social-democratic party (given the nationalist political legacy of the then-unreformed Socialist Party of Serbia, which claimed that position) and that the party could expand its political influence as well as integrate many unconsolidated parties of the centre-left.

This ideological transformation was not reflected in party programmes which did not contain elaborated social democratic principles. The 2001 party programme, interestingly, stated that the Democratic Party was a flexible party of principles rather than of ideology, as well as a party interested in results rather than ideological orthodoxy (DS 2001).

However, in its later documents, this party included more social-democratic content. In its 2007 election manifesto (DS 2007), for example, the party argued that it intended to develop a market economy, but also a socially responsible state, and that it would fight against 'wild capitalism' and misuse of the market. It also advocated 'a new social contract' in line with modern social-democratic tendencies, although without elaborating its content. The party's stances on socio-economic issues thus became more embedded in social democratic principles over the years. On the other hand, this party never emphasised national issues (unlike the majority of Serbian parties) and it had consistently moderate and rather liberal stances on identity and statehood issues.

However, it is questionable whether this ideological transformation was completed. Vujačić (2007) argued that the Democratic Party remained close to the liberal family despite its intentions to be social democratic. Moreover, a majority of the party's electorate, including party members, did not associate the Democratic Party with the social democratic option, although it strove to have a key position on the moderate left of the political spectrum since 2000 (Stojiljković, 2007). Stojiljković (2011, p.93) pointed out that the Democratic Party was an example of 'a centre party with highly pragmatic and problematic orientation, which abandoned the principle of explicit and precise positioning on the left-right continuum'. Goati (2009, p.284) also claimed that the Democratic Party, judging by its policy, was safely close to the liberal family, but its intentions were with the social-democratic family. The Democratic Party thus largely abandoned its liberal political legacy and aimed to become a fully-fledged member of the social democratic family. It can be therefore best characterised as a social democratic party with a very significant liberal legacy.

The Socialist Party of Serbia was founded in 1990 as the successor of the Serbian League of Communists. Given its pronounced nationalist rhetoric and policies throughout the 1990s, this communist-successor party might have been categorised in Siaroff's (2000, p.14) words as 'the left-centre national populist party'. Siaroff argued that this type of parties had been positioned left of the socio-economic centre, but what was key was their strong populist nationalism. Mudde (2007) specifically noted that the Socialist Party of Serbia had pronounced 'social populist ideology', and argued this party seemed better classified as 'radical opportunist', rather than 'radical nationalist'.

Following the death of its long-term authoritarian leader, Slobodan Milošević, the Socialist Party of Serbia embarked on a gradual ideological transformation in the mid-2000s in terms of its position on both the socio-economic left-right and the cosmopolitanism-nationalism dimensions. Specifically, this party expressed an ideological suspicion towards private property and privatisation throughout the 1990s. It perceived the privatisation of public property as general extortion and theft, and it gave up opposing this privatisation only in its 2003 programme. However, even the 2003 programmatic declaration pointed out that the Socialists were against total privatisation and in favour of the strengthening and preservation of the public sector (Vukomanović 2007). At the same time, its 2006 programmatic declaration objected to the results of ‘the October 2000 capitalist counter-revolution’, since ‘the Socialists saved Serbia from the transition, while those who came to power afterwards created dramatic social gaps’ (SPS 2006, p.3). The declaration also praised the achievements of ‘one of the most important statesman of the twentieth century, Slobodan Milošević’ (SPS 2006, p.2).

The Socialists were also anti-globalists and, in the mid-2000s, still expressed Eurosceptic sentiments. They specifically believed that ‘every nation and every man has the right to develop freely in accordance with their traditions and needs, so the Socialists refuse to support those who impose their own beliefs and way of life by using weapons and political violence’ (SPS 2006, p.9), which was an obvious reference to the Western countries and their policies towards Serbia over the last two decades. The party also shared rather traditional and conservative views since it was ‘firmly against the cultural and spiritual degradation as a result of unconditional acceptance of the values that come from abroad. Cultivation and preservation of the Serbian language and Cyrillic script should be of the utmost consideration of the national institutions’ (SPS 2006, p.9).

One of the most remarkable developments in Serbian party politics was the Socialists’ ideological transformation after 2008, when it helped form a pro-European government with the Democratic Party. The party underwent a substantial, although strategically driven, ideological reorientation in an effort to position itself as a modern, European, social-democratic party, both in relation to socio-economic and identity issues. The 2010 party programme was a reflection of such an intention, and represented a radical break with the previous ideology. It explicitly stated that the Socialists remembered their mistakes, authoritarian rule, economic failures and persecution of political opponents, and that the new generation should know the full truth about the party’s past (SPS 2010). The

reoriented party, however, stood for 'a democratic political culture and a spirit of tolerance, open and constructive discussion and dialogue', respect for different ideas, the rights and interests of minorities and a secular state (SPS 2010). The party's vice president, Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011), argued in an interview that the party was in favour of a socially responsible market economy, social justice and equality, an emphasis on individual interests, as well as the strengthening of partnerships with trade unions, NGOs and civil society. It also opposed centralisation and state control of the economy, arguing, 'private property has historically proved its economic and social sustainability and efficiency', and therefore supported the process of privatisation (SPS 2010). In summary, the Socialist Party of Serbia can be classified as a party that belonged to a social-democratic family after 2008, since its programme and (somewhat its) policies were based on socio-democratic values. Additionally, its nationalistic populism, as defined by Siaroff (2000) and Mudde (2007), vanished both from party documents and rhetoric, but also from the policies this party has pursued since 2008 (and particularly since 2012 general election).

Finally, the Social Democratic Party of Croatia, founded in 1990, was the legal successor of the Croatian League of Communists. As a post-communist successor party, it underwent rapid ideological transformation in the early 1990s and has since been a consistent advocate of the social-democratic values that permeated the party's programmatic documents and rhetoric, as expressed by all interviewed senior officials (Vrbat, Interview 2011; Lugarić, Interview 2011; Mondekar, Interview 2011). In the early 2000s, the party started identifying itself with the values of 'the European third way social democracy', understood as 'a path towards the post-modern society based on sustainable growth, new technologies, pluralism of values and interests, underlying social justice and concern for human rights' (SDP, 2004). The party also stood for 'a social Croatia' based on the affirmation of work and creativity, appreciation of the role of capital, but also a high degree of solidarity with the weakest in a society (SDP 2004). Its 2004 political declaration (SDP 2004) stated, 'social democracy is a historical choice' of this party, since it was against political authoritarianism, backward conservatism and isolationism, while being in favour of political equality, social justice and a modern, European Croatia (SDP 2004). Its 2007 election manifesto stated that this party strove for the promotion of entrepreneurship, but also 'responsibility of ownership, public health service, a society that takes care of the weak and unprotected, as well as consideration and respect for the human differences that enrich a society' (SDP 2007a). This party is therefore characterised as a social democratic party

with the most consistent and elaborated social democratic ideology of any in the two cases examined.

### **3.3.2 Conservative parties**

There were a number of parties across both countries with conservative and traditional ideologies. According to their programmes and policies, the Democratic Party of Serbia and New Serbia may be characterised as conservative parties, while the Serbian Progressive Party also claimed to belong to this party family, although it was essentially pragmatic and the least ideologically profiled core party in the region. In addition, the Croatian Democratic Union and the Croatian Peasants' Party, although categorised as Christian democrat and agrarian respectively, to a large extent shared these values. Conservatives in these countries were primarily national conservatives; this aligns with Von Beyme's (1985 p.57) argument that this family emphasises national themes and national identity in countries where the process of nation building was late, as was the case in Serbia and Croatia. These were also parties whose programmatic documents and political discourse contained pronounced elements of social-democratic economic principles, but also strong traditionalism and conservatism – they maintained a close proximity to the traditionalist pole of the modernism-traditionalism axis. In other words, they were not liberal conservatives given the lack of liberal economic arguments adopted by these parties.

The Democratic Party of Serbia was founded in 1992 as a national, conservative, centre-right party. The fundamental party principles included: support for the Serbian Orthodox Church; demographic recovery and population growth; preservation of traditional moral values as the foundation of the family, society and the state; protection of national identity and self-awareness; and the strengthening of national cultural institutions as well as protection of Cyrillic script (DSS 2010). Its programme also expressed strong traditionalism and stated, 'true patriotism and education of youth in the spirit of love for the motherland should be the basis of state policy' (DSS 2010). In socio-economic terms, however, this party advocated social justice and social dialogue between workers and employers, aimed at providing all citizens with a decent life, employment, social and health care, especially during the global economic crisis (DSS 2010). Stojiljković (2011) noted 'the populist solidaristic' orientation of the party, which was visible in its explicit appeals for solidarity, social justice and the social role of state. Vukomanović (2007) thus concluded that this party exhibited a concept of paternalistic social care for the widest and most heterogeneous vulnerable groups. As a result, there was an imbalance between the strong

social democratic elements of its socio-economic rhetoric and the prevailing rightist conservative characteristics of its political programme. In addition, unlike the majority of Serbian parties, this party did not significantly change its ideological principles over the years and it consistently acted in line with its primarily conservative political founding principles.

The Serbian Progressive Party was founded by a group of moderate members that broke away from the Serbian Radical Party in 2008. Similar to the Socialists, this party's leadership also underwent remarkable ideological transformation and fully abandoned the radical right ideology of the Radicals. However, the ideological profile of this party remained unclear and vague. Although it aims to present itself as a moderate centre-right party, there is little evidence that would support its self-categorisation. This was the most pragmatic and the least ideologically profiled core party in the region, as a consequence of the strategic and tactical decision of party leaders to avoid 'identity issues' (having advocated radical right nationalism for almost two decades) and focus pragmatically on socio-economic issues. In socio-economic terms, the Serbian Progressive Party's key principles contained the usual social-democratic slogans advocated by almost all Serbian parties, such as protection of a welfare state, reduction of unemployment and the distributive role of the state (SNS 2008). The party's 2011 programme specifically stated its opposition to privatisation based on the 'shock therapy' concept that led to the redistribution of wealth in the interests of big business and the creation of 'the economic system of party capitalism' (SNS 2011). The party thus stood for the redistributive and stabilising role of the state, which should regulate the market of goods, services, capital and labour, including income redistribution. It also advocated social justice, the implementation of fair privatisation and a review of the legality of the privatisations that had been carried out (SNS 2008). However, in line with its pragmatic nature, after coming to power in 2012, this party started pursuing a neoliberal economic policy of rapidly privatising the remaining state-owned companies and sharply reducing state subsidies.

In terms of identity issues and its location on the modernism-conservatism ideological axis, the party did not elaborate any meaningful stances. It clearly abandoned the Radicals' extreme ideology of a Greater Serbia. The party initially advocated the peaceful formation of a joint state between Serbia and the Bosnian entity of the Republic of Srpska; however, it abandoned this goal in its 2011 party programme. The preservation of the territorial integrity of Serbia and military neutrality remained, however, among its core principles

(SNS 2008). The party programme was highly pragmatic and almost exclusively focused on the practical policies that the party aimed to pursue. It contained only the most general references to identity as ‘one of the most important tasks of the state’, which should protect ‘the Serbian cultural authenticity, that is also open to all cultures in Europe and the world’ and to the family, which plays ‘a crucial role in educating the younger generations based on the tradition’ (SNS, 2011). A senior party official, Marko Djurić (Interview 2011) argued in an interview that the Serbian Progressive Party was a centre-right party that aimed to join the European People’s Party, although he admitted that ‘ideology was not a priority of this party’. Senior party official Damjan Jović (Interview 2001) further specified in an interview that the party advocated moderate conservatism and is therefore committed to respect traditional social values, the strengthening of families, as well as preservation of the ‘social ethos’. He also argued that in socio-economic terms, this party was in favour of the market economy, while maintaining limited state control only over ‘strategic’ industries, and that it preferred ‘creating the conditions for more jobs to providing people with social support’. Given the lack of data and its essentially pragmatic nature, this study categorises this party mostly based on its self-identification as a moderate conservative party with a rather weak (and still developing) ideological profile.

Finally, New Serbia was formed in 1998 as a monarchist and conservative party that stood for Serbia as a state of the Serbian people, the Serbian Orthodox Church as the backbone of moral and spiritual renewal, as well as a constitutional monarchy (NS 2010). However, as a member of a number of the ruling coalitions after 2000, the party did not insist on the establishment of a monarchy, while it strongly supported the Democratic Party of Serbia in other programmatic-political questions (Goati 2009, p.295) until the 2010 split between these parties over the issue of Serbian EU membership. This split pointed out the divergent natures of these two parties, with the Democratic Party of Serbia being primarily ideologically driven, and New Serbia being more sensitive to electoral concerns, as discussed later in this chapter. In socio-economic terms, New Serbia adopted a rightist concept of economic development, with the private initiative of individuals and freedom of entrepreneurship as the driving forces of economic development (NS 2010). This party also argued that the state must serve the interests of all and prevent monopolistic activities on the market, but it must not have a dominant role.



### 3.3.3 Christian democratic parties

As ‘one of the most Catholic countries in Europe’ (Perica 2006, p.311), Croatia had an influential Catholic Church as well as a rich Christian democratic political tradition. As a result, the major centre right party in Croatia, the Croatian Democratic Union, may be characterised as a Christian democratic party. On the other hand, the political tradition in Serbia, where a large majority of population practices Orthodox Christianity, did not allow for the emergence of Orthodox Christian parties (although there was a non-parliamentary and politically irrelevant party named the Demo-Christian Party of Serbia).

The Croatian Democratic Union underwent significant ideological transformation in the early 2000s. Given its nationalist and authoritarian policies throughout the 1990s, the party was often described as a conservative, nationalist umbrella party with a radical right faction and as a ‘fundamentally populist radical right party’ (Mudde 2007; Šedo 2010). However, after the death of its authoritarian president, Franjo Tuđman, and the election of Ivo Sanader as a moderate party leader, the Croatian Democratic Union transformed into a ‘truly conservative party’, as a result of expulsion of radical individuals and factions (Mudde 2007, p.54). The party ideology, since the mid-2000, became a blend of pronounced national, conservative, traditionalist and primarily Christian democratic values (PEE 2012). The Croatian Democratic Union thus placed ‘man with his inalienable rights, indispensable individuality and social responsibility’ at the centre of its politics, and strove particularly for a Christian ethic and family values (HDZ 2002). It was committed to ‘the spiritual and cultural heritage of the Croatian people, as part of a common European civilisation and cultural heritage’ (HDZ 2002). It also advocated a new approach to education, science and culture in order to preserve ‘Croatian scientific and cultural heritage’ (HDZ 2002). The party’s 2011 election programme argued that the Croatian Democratic Union ‘has consistently and uncompromisingly supported social values such as freedom, justice, social solidarity, equality before the law, patriotism, human rights, family and other values that protect both individuals and society’. It also stated that the party’s ‘fundamental belief is that changes and reforms must be implemented in a way that would not lead to social conflicts and tensions’ (HDZ 2011).

In socio-economic terms, the party expressed leftist principles, similar to its Serbian counterparts. The 2002 programme, for example, stated that the Croatian Democratic Union is against socially unacceptable and insensitive economic liberalism that privileges the interests of shareholders at expense of the employees and the interests of a society

(HDZ 2002). In its 2011 party programme, it supported ‘the social responsibility market economy’, where the state encourages enterprises but does not interfere in their work. It also insisted on a social market economy based on balancing the interests of and developing partnerships between workers, entrepreneurs and government (HDZ 2011).

### **3.3.4 Agrarian parties**

Unlike Serbia, where conditions did not give rise to organised rural parties, the leading pre-World War II party in Croatia was the agrarian Croatian Peasants’ Party, which was officially re-established in 1989 as a traditional centre-right, agrarian and conservative party. The Croatian Peasants’ Party was a party primarily focused on the interests of its core electorates: farmers and craftsmen. Šedo (2010, p.80) thus argued that this was a principally agrarian party that gave priority to agrarian, conservative and social issues, with ‘the support for the rural sector as the first and foremost issue in the party programme’. The party also stood for ‘the principle of Christian solidarity and traditional, Croatian values’, including preservation of national identity, culture, language and customs, as well as the promotion of family oriented values (HSS 2009). In socio-economic terms, the Croatian Peasants’ Party may be seen as a rather right-wing party (Čular and Gregurić 2007) that advocated liberal ideas of the market economy and private ownership as its essential element, and believed that free, private initiative was the main driver of the economy (HSS 2000).

### **3.3.5 Liberal parties**

In spite of a weak liberal tradition, there were three liberal parties across these two countries: G17 Plus<sup>10</sup> and the Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia, and the oldest liberal party in the region, the Croatian People’s Party-Liberal Democrats. These were also the strongest modernist parties in both countries, whereas they expressed varied positions on socio-economic issues.

Both Serbian liberal parties were initially proponents of rightist socio-economic neoliberalism. Specifically, G17 Plus stood for ‘an open society based on democracy, private property and the market economy, where free individuals and their individual rights are the foundation of overall social organization’ (G17 Plus 2004, p.3). It was essentially a party of pro-European reformers, who belonged to the neoliberal economic school. This

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<sup>10</sup> G17 Plus merged into the United Regions of Serbia in 2013.

party believed that the free market with a strong social component was the best way to foster human potential and secure the right and efficient use of natural resources, and thus it opposed state regulation of market mechanisms (G17 Plus 2004). G17 Plus argued that the state should not interfere in relations between individuals, nor impact on individual entrepreneurship and initiative (G17 Plus 2004). It was thus a modernist party that advocated rapid and comprehensive social and economic reforms aimed at ‘creating an economically strong and democratically stable Serbia that will become a leader in the Balkans’ (G17 Plus 2004, p.2).

However, G17 Plus pragmatically reshaped its ideological underpinning and decided to almost exclusively focus on state decentralisation, which became its most fundamental principle. This was the result of the fact that the ‘regionalist’ niche in the political space was not occupied by any other party, while there were a number of influential local politicians that advocated decentralisation and more power for local communities and regions. As a result of its newly founded belief (particularly after merging into the United Regions of Serbia), this party tempered its neoliberal position on socio-economic issues, while it remained strongly modernist and liberal in relation to identity issues.

The Liberal Democratic Party was founded in 2005 by former members of the Democratic Party that had been dissatisfied with party politics after the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić. The Liberal Democratic Party was a model classical liberal party that rejected any form of traditionalism and advocated a secular state, multiculturalism, radical economic transition and the rapid completion of privatisation (LDP 2011). The party programme also pointed out that prices should be determined by the market, not the state, and it strongly supported privatisation of public enterprises. It also asserted that the state should not take upon itself the role of entrepreneur, owner or manager; it should have a very limited role. The party believed that a state was the biggest opponent of individuals and called for a radical reduction of state intervention and deregulation of the economy. It also stood for a radical break from the Serbian politics of the 1990s, a complete change of the government policy towards Kosovo and acceptance of the reality that Serbia has not had jurisdiction over Kosovo since 1999, as well as Serbian membership of NATO, which made it unique among relevant Serbian parties (LDP 2011).

Finally, the Croatian People’s Party-Liberal Democrats was founded in 1990 by a number of prominent political leaders of the Croatian 1971 national political movement as

a social liberal party. Its 2008 programme (HNS 2008) stated that this party was committed to the highest standards in protecting, developing and promoting the human and civil rights of every individual, regardless of his or her individual characteristics. The Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats, unlike its Serbian counterparts, adopted significant leftist principles in socio-economic terms, advocating a stronger government role in addressing economic and social issues. The party advocated a free market with clear and equal laws for all citizens, which would minimise the arbitrary intervention of the state (HNS 2008). It also stood for a society of equal opportunities, primarily through education being made available to everyone, as well as health care and social policies designed to protect the most sensitive social groups (HNS 2008). Čular and Gregurić (2007) thus argued that this party had the position of the most leftist socio-economic party in Croatia.

### **3.3.6 Radical right parties**

There were a number of relevant radical right, traditionalist and nationalistic parties in these countries in the analysed period, namely the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights. The Serbian Radical Party was a nationalist, conservative, radical right party whose fundamental political aim, proclaimed in the first paragraph of its 2009 programme, was 'the unification of the entire Serbian nation and establishment of a single, unitary state on the whole Serbian national territory, which would include Serbia, Montenegro, the Republic of Srpska and the Republic of Serbian Krajina' (SRS 2009, p.2). Mudde (2000, p.18) précised that the concept of a Greater Serbia included 'a mono-cultural, centralist state from which all Croats would be expelled, and in which other minorities would only be allowed to stay under the condition that they accept Serbian rule' and argued that this was essentially 'a post-Communist extreme right party'.

Overall, the party's ideology was a combination of national-extremist political programmes and a mix of classical liberal and social-democratic principles in the economy (Vukomanović 2007). It was essentially a conservative, traditionalist party that advocated the development of national consciousness and patriotism, preservation of national traditions, protection of the traditional Serbian family and bringing up youth in the Serbian Orthodox spirit (SRS 2009). The party called for a return to the traditional moral values and norms of Orthodox Christianity, as written in the Ten Commandments of the Bible (SRS 2009). In socio-economic terms, the Radicals have, over time, adopted an ideological mix that covers almost the entire spectrum between the left and right. Stojiljković (2011, p.90) argued that the Radicals crossed the path from initial state interventionism toward a

liberal position and advocacy for a minimal state and the supremacy of private property, free market and enterprise, then back toward re-advocating the active role of the state and inclining toward the position of 'left-centrist etatism'.

The Croatian Party of Rights was a radical right party focused on 'the historic right of the Croatian people to self-determination (EED 2012). It was founded in 1990 as a radical right party whose leadership was directly involved in the post-Yugoslav wars. Čular and Gregurić (2007) argued, however, that it softened its radical ideological drift after 2000. The party also experienced a number of intra-party splits, but all factions and consequently formed parties were based on a similar radical right ideology, including the Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević, which secured one MP position in the 2011 election. The party was classified by Mudde (2007) as a 'populist radical right' party, since it is (nominally) democratic and populist.

It was also somewhat a clerical party, arguing, 'all animate and inanimate creatures were created by the will of God, and every man's actions must be consistent with it' (HSP 2013c). It emphasised traditional family and Catholic values, and was rather hostile towards other nations. 'This party stood for Croatia's 'national and state sovereignty on its entire historic and ethnic territory, without which the centuries' old aspirations of the Croatian people could not be achieved' (EED 2012). The Croatian Party of Rights was committed to the protection of Croatian cultural heritage, supported the traditional values of Croatian morality as a basis of everyday life, and also stood for protecting life from conception to natural death (HSP 2012). This party underlined that Croatia was a sovereign state in internationally recognised borders and that it would not tolerate any encroachment on its sovereignty; therefore it 'permanently fought against all plans and ideas of a Greater Serbia' (HSP, 2010). The party also claimed that each Croat has a duty to act in accordance with the principles of justice and morality by which the homeland was defended (HSP 2010). Čular and Gregurić (2007) argued that in socio-economic terms, this party mainly adopted centrist positions but focused overwhelmingly on identity and state-building issues.

### **3.3.7 An overview of the ideologies of Serbian and Croatian parties**

The above analysis of party ideologies in Serbia and Croatia primarily shows that in general terms these were newer and weakly rooted parties. This is a result of the fact that most of these parties did not emerge out of the deep social cleavages, but primarily as 'political

projects of some groups, leaders and narrow political elites' (Pavlović 2011, p.150). The cases of Serbian and Croatian parties seem, therefore, to confirm to Mudde's (2007, p.41) argument that 'most post-communist parties have so far been mere vehicles of small groups of elites, which sported diffuse and highly similar ideologies' and (as we shall see in Chapter 6) held very weak links with social groups. The following subsection discusses and summarises the ideological profiles of these parties as well as whether they were generally more strategically or ideologically driven.

First, Croatian parties seem to have been relatively more ideologically profiled than Serbian ones. After experiencing (albeit rather strategically driven) ideological transformation in the early 1990s (the Social Democratic Party) and the early 2000s (the Croatian Democratic Union), they generally consistently advocated their fundamental principles related to both socio-economic and identity issues, with the latter being more developed and elaborated. On the other side, Serbian parties generally appear to have been less ideologically profiled. They rarely expressed consistent, coherent and fully developed ideological concepts. Specifically, a high number of parties have been searching for their ideological profiles in relation to socio-economic issues, whereas their positions on identity issues were more stable and deeply rooted. For example, the Serbian Progressive Party constituted a prime example of a purely pragmatic party whose programmatic documents did not express any meaningful ideological underpinning. The Democratic Party (and to a lesser degree, the United Regions of Serbia) has been searching for its identity related to socio-economic issues from the early 2000s. In addition, the Serbian Radical Party had a confusing and eclectic mix of both rightist liberal and leftist paternalistic stances on the economy.

Second, as a consequence, Serbian parties were primarily strategically driven and office- or vote-seeking parties, with a few notable exceptions of primarily ideologically driven parties (the Democratic Party of Serbia and Liberal Democratic Party). This was mostly the consequence of an underdeveloped ideological basis (the Serbian Progressive Party) or strategically changed ideological profiles (the Socialist Party of Serbia, Democratic Party). Conversely, Croatian parties appear to have been more ideologically motivated, given their more developed ideological profiles (the Social Democratic Party), with the exception of the Croatian Democratic Union, which seems to have been more strategically driven. However, there was a general tendency of all parties to act strategically and pragmatically, and given the lack of linkages with social and economic groups, none of the parties in these countries may be characterised as strongly or exclusively ideologically driven. Both the level

of ideological profiling and the intrinsic nature of these parties have consequences for their responses to Europe, which will be discussed in Section 3.4.7.

Third, the large majority of parties across both countries advocated social democratic approaches to socio-economic issues, with a strong redistributive role for the state. Parties thus tended to avoid the rightist liberal concept of the economy based on private initiative and individualism, which was very unpopular with electorates that were used to a significant role of the state in the relatively successful model of Yugoslav self-management socialism until the late 1980s (although the same tendency can be noticed in other Central and Eastern European countries). Mihailović (2011) thus argued that the most dominant slogan among Serbian parties has been ‘we are all a little bit Socialists’. Consequently, political contestation along the socio-economic left-right largely remained in the background, despite unresolved social and economic problems that could have opened up space for politically profitable party positioning. This was a reflection of the fact that the class cleavages that generate these issues and create conditions for parties to compete along this axis have never been dominant in these countries. In other words, social groups with differentiated economic interests (clearly recognisable classes) did emerge and were not fully erased during the long communist period, but these groups did not manage to politically articulate their interests for parties to seek to represent.

Fourth, as a result of this, there has been the long-standing dominance of ‘the ideological cultural cleavage’ (Čular and Gregurić 2007, p.5). This was a dominant axis of party competition, with religious, traditionalist and conservative values on one side, and liberal, secular, modernist concepts on the other. This type of social cleavage fundamentally characterised both Serbia and Croatia (Čular and Gregurić 2007; Pavlović 2011). Pavlović (2011) thus claimed that the main line of ideological and value-based division in Serbia was on the axis between national traditionalism and civic modernisation. In Croatia, this line of political division also remained dominant, although to a lesser extent than in Serbia, given that this country solved its key state-building issues, which crucially give rise to these divisions, in the late 1990s.

Fifth, regarding party families, six families were present in Croatia, whereas there were no relevant Christian democratic and agrarian parties in Serbia. This was due to the fact that the dominant Orthodox Christian Church in Serbia did not have a tradition of political organisation as did Catholic and Protestant countries. In addition, as Von Beyme (1985)

argued, Christian democratic parties were generally formed as a defensive counter-reaction to liberal or secular legislation – none of which significantly threatened the Serbian Orthodox Church. Pavlović (2011) pointed out, therefore, that the split between state and church was not a relevant political cleavage in this country, because almost all of the relevant parties tried to get closer to the Church and obtain its support. On the other hand, delayed modernisation and industrialisation, resulting in a lack of any large urban areas, and the prevailing rural nature of Serbian society, in which farmers were not a politically articulate social group, did not give rise to the rural-urban conflict and concomitant development of agrarian parties.

Furthermore, ecological and radical leftist-postmodernist parties (like the Danish and Norwegian Left Socialists and the Dutch Green Left) based on post-material values in contemporary societies were not identified in these countries. This can be attributed to the fact that these were not developed, Western-style societies that had entered the phase of post-industrial development, which may cause a fundamental change in key social values. Therefore, the issues concerning, for example, ecology, nuclear disarmament, pacifism, globalisation, gender equality or quality of life were not important social cleavages that may have given rise to parties in these two societies, where issues of national identities remained dominant.

The non-existence of communist parties, on the other hand, may be explained by the deeply compromised and stigmatised radical left in Serbia, due to negative experiences from the 1990s, when the Socialist Party of Serbia pursued pronounced nationalist policies (Pavlović 2011). The negative associations with communism in Croatia may be seen in the context of the widely perceived inferior position of Croatia in communist Yugoslavia, as well as the crimes committed by the communists against nationally oriented anti-communists in the aftermath of World War II. As a consequence, neither the (unreformed) traditional communist parties that display ‘nostalgia for the “golden era” of Communism’, like the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Hloušek and Kopeček 2010, p.47), nor reform communist parties like those in France or Italy were identified in these countries. Finally, regional and ethnic parties were present in both countries. Almost all traditional national minorities and historic regions (such as Vojvodina in Serbia and Istria in Croatia), had authentic political representatives. However, these were generally small, although parliamentary, parties and this thesis did not deal with them, since it was focused on the core national parties and



their stances on the EU. The characteristics of party ideologies in both countries have direct implications for their stances on the EU, which will be addressed in the following section.

Finally, to what extent can the Western European model of party family and classification be applied and how useful is it in the study of Western Balkan parties? In other words, to what extent have Serbian and Croatian parties converged with the Western concept of party families over the last two decades? Mair and Mudde (1998) noted the argument in the comparative literature that the major differences between the East and West in Europe have been virtually overcome, and that political parties on both sides of the former divide now increasingly resemble one another. Hloušek and Kopeček (2010) also argued that there was a visible and significant convergence among the family identities of parties in the Eastern and Western Europe. They stressed that ideological and political orientations of parties are now firmly established in Eastern Europe and that it is therefore possible to make use of the classic Western European concept. However, Hloušek and Kopeček (2010, p.7) argued that the situation in the Balkans was more complicated, and 'that convergence can be observed only with major reservations', given the slow political profiling of these parties.

This programmatic convergence may be noticed to a certain extent, given that the programmes of the Serbian and Croatian parties were mainly (re)written based on the political traditions of similar Western parties. For example, the vice president of the Socialist Party of Serbia, Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011), pointed out in an interview that this party adopted as a model a formula of 'the plural left', which was successfully implemented by the French Socialist Party from 1997 to 2002. Similar developments may be noticed in some other parties, too (the Croatian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party in Croatia, as well as the Democratic Party in Serbia). This convergence was, however, generally more present in the case of more ideologically homogeneous party families, such as the social democratic family, compared to the naturally less homogeneous conservatives (Von Beyme 1985). On the other hand, the specific context in which these parties emerged in the early 1990s, as discussed above, certainly affected their profiling, marked their identity and ideology, and thus made them significantly different from European parties of similar ideological orientations.

### **3.4 Party attitudes towards the EU and ideology in Serbia and Croatia**

After outlining the ideologies of Serbian and Croatian parties grouped into party families, the following section looks at party stances on the substance of European integration and examines the extent to which these attitudes were ideologically driven. It specifically seeks to identify cases where party ideology seemed to have played a key role in party positioning on the EU. Given the possibility that a party can also be strategically driven, it is rather challenging to establish whether and to what extent the motives for certain party stances were driven by either of these factors.

The thesis follows the method employed by Rovny (2004) and first considers parties' original ideological stances and genesis, as elaborated in the previous section. This is followed by an estimation of how this relates to the values, goals and policies of the EU, which suggests the likelihood of parties assuming Euroscepticism or Euroenthusiasm 'as an implicit addition to its original propositions and voters' interests' (Rovny 2004, p.38) – that is, their ideology and identity. This is then compared to actual party stances on the EU as outlined in their programmes, statements and political behaviour, which should allow for an estimation of the extent of parties' ideological or strategic motivation. Moreover, the thesis looks specifically at critical junctures where there was a misfit between party ideology and the strategic benefits they could have gained. In other words, situations where parties behaved in what appear to not be in their strategic interests (i.e., getting votes, office or implementing policies, depending on the type of party) may indicate that their responses to Europe were ideologically driven.

In order to understand the nature of mostly ideologically driven positions, this section examines party positions on two dominant dimensions of social cleavage in both countries in relation to their attitudes towards the EU. It also looks at party families to establish whether parties belonging to the same family expressed the same or similar attitudes towards the EU, and whether we can predict party stances on the EU based on their ideological family. The Serbian and Croatian parties' stances on the EU and their ideological party families are listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Party families and attitudes towards the EU of Serbian and Croatian political parties

Sources: Party programmes and interviews with party officials, Serbian Parliament (2013) and Croatian Parliament (2013)

Serbian parties	Croatian parties	Attitudes towards the EU	Number of MPs	
			Dec. 2011	Dec. 2013
1. Social democratic parties				
Democratic Party ( <i>liberal legacy</i> )		Hard Euroenthusiastic	64	43
Socialist Party of Serbia ( <i>left-centre national populist until the mid-2000s</i> )		Hard Eurosceptic until the mid-2000s Soft Euroenthusiastic since 2008	11	25
	Social Democratic Party	Hard Euroenthusiastic	53	58
2. Conservative parties				
Democratic Party of Serbia ( <i>national conservatism</i> )		Soft Eurosceptic	21	21
New Serbia ( <i>national conservatism</i> )		Soft Eurosceptic	9	8
Serbian Progressive Party ( <i>very weakly ideologically profiled</i> )		Soft Euroenthusiastic	21	65
3. Christian democratic parties				
	Croatian Democratic Union ( <i>nationalist populist until the early 2000s</i> )	Hard Eurosceptic until the early 2000s Soft Euroenthusiastic since the early 2000s	65	43
4. Agrarian parties				
	Croatian Peasants' Party	Soft Eurosceptic	6	1
5. Liberal parties				
G17 Plus/United Regions of Serbia		Hard Euroenthusiastic	24	15
Liberal Democratic Party		Hard Euroenthusiastic	12	12
	Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats ( <i>social liberalism</i> )	Hard Euroenthusiastic	5	14
6. Radical right parties				
Serbian Radical Party		Hard Eurosceptic	57	0
	Croatian Party of Rights	Hard Eurosceptic	1	0

### 3.4.1 Social democrats and the EU

All three social democratic parties in these countries expressed a pro-European orientation. This has always been a feature of the Democratic Party in Serbia and the Social Democratic Party in Croatia since they were founded in the early 1990s, while the pro-European position of the Socialist Party of Serbia has gradually formed since the mid-2000s, and in particular since 2008. The thesis therefore argues that first two parties were hard Euroenthusiasts, given their principled pro-EU positions on the substance of European integration, while the Socialists were soft Euroenthusiasts due to their strategically motivated ideological transformation that also included a shift of stances on the EU.

The European credentials of the Democratic Party, unlike its socio-democratic orientation, have never been contested, since the party has been consistently pro-European. However, as with the majority of parties, the Democratic Party did not express any meaningful position on the substance of the European integration. It was therefore very difficult to establish any concrete party attitudes towards the EU as it is and as it is developing, since the party has never considered these issues apart from very general arguments that ‘a united Europe can become competitive on a global scale, only by creating the largest market and the accumulation of vast economic power’ (DS 2005). On the other hand, it appears that this party supported the general ideas of integration that underlie the EU, given that its overall stances and policies essentially did not run counter to the principles of the ceding or transfer of powers to supranational institutions such as the EU. Moreover, the Democratic Party was a strong and consistent supporter of Serbian EU integration, as confirmed by all the party officials interviewed (Alimpić, Interview 2011; Ćomic Interview 2011; Jevtić Interview 2011). The party programme (DS 2009, p.23) clearly stated that its goal was Serbian accession to the EU, arguing that its obligation was to affirm European values and prepare the country for genuine European integration. The Democrats thus stood for ‘European structures and standards to become a part of Serbian society, and Serbia to become an equal member state of the EU’ (DS 2009, p.23). Moreover, its 2007 declaration (DS 2007, p.118) stated, ‘the key to solving all the most important social, economic and political issues is Serbian EU integration’ and that ‘EU membership is a way and crucial chance for Serbia to become a modern and developed society’.

The party’s overall position on the EU (particularly Serbian EU membership, since its attitudes towards the substance of the European integration have not yet been fully articulated) may be, therefore, interpreted as principled Euroenthusiastic. It remained pro-

European and pleaded for Serbian EU accession, both as an opposition and governing party, and even in the period after 2008, when a majority of EU member states recognised Kosovo as an independent state, which temporarily blocked the process of EU integration and resulted in growing public Euroscepticism. The party's rhetoric never contained elements of any scepticism towards the EU and it tended to underline its crucial contribution to Serbian EU accession.

However, although its position on the EU appears to have been principled, this party was specifically less likely to be driven by any particular ideology. This was due to the fact that the Democratic Party was weakly ideologically rooted and can be seen as a more pragmatic party, as discussed above. Its ideological reorientation in the early 2000s and turn to the social democratic pole appear to have been a pragmatic decision devoid of any substantial and intrinsic belief in social democratic values and principles. Consequently, its hard Euroenthusiasm was not couched in ideological terms in key party documents. In other words, it did not provide any social democratic vision of Europe, nor did it explain the kind of Europe it stood for. Even when arguing in favour of Serbian EU integration, it used the usual slogans employed by all parties that were in favour of their countries' EU membership. For instance, the Democratic Party particularly stressed that the values that constitute the EU are the party's own values; it then listed a number of very general principles, such as investments into knowledge and skills, active development policies, strengthening of the education system, regeneration of cities and villages, and support for small and medium enterprises (DS 2007).

It seems, therefore, that this party's orientation towards the EU was essentially a core element of its overall identity and 'world view', yet not necessarily related to any particular, firmly rooted ideology. An initial pro-European position unambiguously adopted by the party founders in the early 1990s remained a fundamental feature of this party, regardless of its ideological reinventions. Although pragmatic, it has never compromised its principled beliefs in the EU. In other words, party family seems to have been irrelevant for this party's stance on the EU. The Democratic Party was, therefore, a prime example of an essentially strategically driven and pragmatic party that expressed a principled, ideologically motivated position on the EU.

Conversely, the Socialist Party of Serbia underwent a fundamental shift in its position on the EU. Until the mid-2000s, it was perceived as a largely nationalist, anti-globalist and anti-

Western party that expressed a strong critical stance on the EU. The party specifically ‘condemned Europe because of its participation in the 1999 aggression against Yugoslavia, which was an expression of American imperialist strategy’ (Komšić 2007, p.28). The Socialists argued, ‘Europe has participated in the destruction of its own interest and universal values such as freedom, equality and humanity’ and that it was ‘the most profound moral downfall in the history of mankind’ (Komšić 2007, p.28). Interestingly, though, the party did not articulate outright rejection of Serbian EU membership. Although ‘it has never been explicitly against Serbian EU integration’ as argued by party vice president Slavica Djukić Dejanović (Interview 2011) in an interview, it did not endorse a 2004 parliamentary resolution on Serbian accession to the EU. Even though it asserted the accession of Serbia to the EU as a political goal at its 2003 congress, this party practically nullified this commitment through a decisive refusal to extradite those charged with war crimes to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Goati 2009). The Socialists also stood against any attempts to trade EU membership for the recognition of Kosovo, since ‘the West has not given up “the carrot and stick policy” in its relation to Serbia’ (SPS 2006, p.44). Therefore, the party position at that time may be characterised as ideologically motivated, principled hard Eurosceptic.

The key changes came after the death of its authoritarian leader, Slobodan Milošević, in 2006, when Ivica Dačić, as the new party president, pushed for a strategic ideological re-positioning, including a sharp shift in stance towards the EU in an effort to legitimise itself as a modern social democratic party. Specifically, the party fully abandoned hostility towards the EU, although it has never publically elaborated a position on the substance of the European integration. Its programme broadly advocated the open borders in Europe that would allow for the free flow of people, goods, capital and ideas (SPS 2006), while the party vice president, Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011), argued that ‘the EU has proven as the most convincing political, economic, cultural and civilizational model that unquestionably has no alternative’. The party position on the substance of the European integration may thus be seen as positive, based on its overall stance and policies pursued after 2008, since no direct position on this issue can be identified.

With regard to the party’s position on Serbian EU membership, a shift as a result of ideological reinvention was obvious. The 2008 declaration on political reconciliation and joint responsibility, signed between the Socialists and a former key political opponent, the Democratic Party, stated, ‘we have always belonged to Europe and have always shared

European values. Our European identity is confirmed by our history and the strategic orientation of Serbia is EU membership' (DS 2008, p.3). The 2010 party programme (SPS 2010), which was a radical break with the party's troublesome past, similarly stated that the priority of Serbian foreign policy should be integration into the EU, based on close ties with the countries of the EU with whom Serbia shares common historical and cultural values and traditions, as well as common economic interests. The Socialists thus believed, 'Serbia should and can give a contribution to building a common European home, from the Atlantic to the Urals', and therefore they 'fully supported and contributed to the negotiations on Serbia's membership in the EU' (SPS 2010, p.24).

This thesis classifies this party as a soft Euroenthusiastic party (Table 3.1) that was essentially strategically driven (despite a rather developed social democratic concept elaborated in the party's programmatic documents since 2008). The Socialists fundamentally changed their stance on this issue in 2008 as a reflection of strategic ideological re-positioning and this stance on the EU appears to have been contingent rather than principled. This transformation was primarily the result of the pragmatic decisions of new party leaders, who realised that if it were to politically survive, the party needed to reinvent itself as a modern social democratic party. Ideological transformation – aimed at maximising the chances of coming to power after almost two decades of hard nationalism and anti-Europeanism – encompassed, as its most important element, a reorientation regarding the desirability of Serbian EU membership, the EU and the West in general (which is examined in Chapter 4). In other words, there was no evidence that (and it may be too early to say whether) the Socialists have fully embraced European values and to what extent their soft Europeanism was a reflection of any deeper ideological beliefs. While its 2010 party programme did represent an elaborated social democratic 'world view', the (social democratic) party position on the EU or the concept of integration for which it stood, are yet to be developed. The soft, rather utilitarian support for the EU was reflected in the words of the party's vice president, Slavica Djukić Dejanović (Interview 2011):

Geographically, historically, economically we are close to the EU. We are a small country that has yet to develop, and we cannot do it alone. We have become extremely exhausted during the previous decades. Without economic investments, Serbia cannot move forward. That is why we have to belong to someone. Logically, that is the EU.

Lastly, the Social Democratic Party of Croatia has consistently been a pro-European party. It was also the party that appeared to be ideologically rooted (compared to other parties in

the region) and whose position on the EU and EU membership was consequently the mostly ideologically driven. Additionally, unlike the majority of other parties, its stance on this issue was elaborated in key programmatic documents. Specifically, the party's concept of the EU was principally an expression of its social democratic orientation. The 2007 manifesto (SDP 2007a) underlined the Social Democratic Party's principled opposition to a Europe of unbridled capital as well as support for a Europe of social solidarity. It stood for the interests of preserving national identity, social solidarity, responsibility and the general good, without allowing 'the market economy to become a market society that only favours the rich' in Europe. The party advocated a Europe that would 'establish and maintain the balance between state and market, individual and social responsibility, competition and solidarity, capital and labour, as well as workers' rights and selfish profit'. It also stood in favour of 'the socially sensitive and solidaristic Europe, which will not be based on maximising profits, but social justice and social values which are of general interest' (SDP 2007b, p.54).

The party has always argued for Croatian EU membership. It claimed that 'the EU brings three key advantages: a long-term political and democratic stability, sustainable economic competitiveness, and the social and legal regulation' (SDP 2007b, p.53). It did not object to pooling sovereignty and pointed out, 'Croatian sovereignty will not be transferred to the EU level, but it will be exercised together with other EU member states' (SDP 2007b, p.49). The party also argued that only EU membership can guarantee the survival of Croatia on the global market. The social democrats criticised the Croatian Democratic Union-led accession negotiations on ideological grounds by arguing that this party made concessions with the Europe of unlimited capital but did not care about human rights and destinies, and that 'it took over our pro-European politics out of necessity and political opportunism, not as its own belief' (SDP 2007b, p.1). It may therefore be argued that this party's positive attitude towards the EU was grounded in its social democratic identity, which provided a framework for this party to perceive itself and determine its key policies. The party itself argued that its attitude towards Europe 'builds on the tradition of social democracy that is the core value of the European Union' (SDP 2007a, p.43). The thesis thus categorises it as a hard Euroenthusiastic party and one of the prime examples of mostly ideologically motivated responses to Europe.



### 3.4.2 Conservatives and the EU

Conservative parties expressed a variety of different stances on the EU, spanning the strong Euroscepticism of the Democratic Party of Serbia and the changing attitudes of New Serbia, to the newly formulated pro-EU position of the Serbian Progressive Party. The fact that the first two parties were national conservatives – that is, culturally conservative and nationally oriented – crucially shaped their stances on the EU.

Since 2008, the national, conservative Democratic Party of Serbia has been the most Eurosceptic core party in Serbia. This party expressed the most thoughtful and developed concept of party-based Euroscepticism in the Western Balkans, which was elaborated in all its party programmatic documents since 2008.<sup>11</sup> There were two separate periods in the party's perception of the EU and Serbian EU membership, demarcated by the *de facto* EU-supported self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo in 2008. Prior to 2008, the party lacked elaborated positions on the substance of European integration, while it expressed qualified support for Serbian EU membership. Its programme stated that Serbia, as a European country, should closely cooperate with European countries, ultimately becoming a member state of the EU (DSS 2010). Party president Vojislav Koštunica stated in 2004 that Serbia essentially belonged to Europe and 'that EU membership is not only what we want, but it's something that must be done and cannot be avoided', adding that there was no alternative to the European path (Serbian government 2010). In 2007, Koštunica's government announced that its main short-term goal would be acquiring EU candidate status and speeding up the process of legislative harmonisation with EU standards (Parliamentary network 2010). As a result, the negotiations on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU were completed and the agreement was initialled in October 2007, which was supported by the Democratic Party of Serbia.

On the other hand, the party has traditionally demonstrated mistrust of the West, primarily the US, and particularly contested the legitimacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) (Goati 2009). It strongly opposed cooperation with the ICTY and the arrest of the individuals indicted for war crimes, which was a key precondition for EU accession; it favoured voluntary surrendering of the indicted. Its programme (DSS 2010) was also a reflection of its contingent support for Serbian EU

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<sup>11</sup> The most comprehensive concept of principled opposition to Serbian EU membership was expressed by the party's key ideologue and leader, Vojislav Koštunica, in a series of publications entitled 'Why Serbia, and the EU?', 'The defence of Kosovo', and 'Serbia and the EU – Legal and political analysis'.

integration, since it stated that Serbia should become an EU member state ‘under the equal conditions’, which was a result of the party’s opinion that the EU did not treat Serbia in the same manner as other states and that the accession conditions were unfair. It also stressed that the fundamental principle of foreign policy should be respectful of the territorial integrity of internationally recognised states and that Serbia’s relations with all countries in the world should be based on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs (DSS 2010).

However, recognition of Kosovo’s independence by a large majority of EU member states fundamentally affected the position of the Democratic Party of Serbia. It became a fully-fledged Eurosceptic party as a result of its principled disagreement with the policies of EU countries towards Serbia. The party adopted strong opposition to further Serbian integration into the EU and subordinated all elements of party politics to the issue of Serbia’s relationship with the EU, emphasising the deleterious effects of joining the EU. As a consequence of the ‘Serbian experience with the EU’, party president Koštunica (DSS 2012a, p.111) also articulated strong criticism of the very concept of the EU as a supranational organisation on the grounds of its ‘undemocratic’ character. His criticism was focused on the EU as a prime example of ‘a post-modern state system that reduces the importance of state sovereignty’ and ‘makes a classic concept of a state – power, territory and nation – relative’. Koštunica (DSS 2012a, p.111) further specified:

The European Union, as a form of transnational and supranational governance, leads to a weakening of traditional foundations of democracy that is a backbone of a nation state. [...] The supranational form of governance, such as the EU, inevitably comes into conflict with democratic procedures and institutions. The European Union has, therefore, transformed from the community of nations, cooperating and working together, into a union of non-sovereign entities, leading to the creation of supranational bureaucratic structures and suppression of democracy in the European context, as well as the weakening of democracy within its member states.

The Democratic Party of Serbia also criticised specific EU policies, particularly its foreign and security policies. The party vice president, Slobodan Samardžić (Interview 2011), thus claimed in an interview that the EU did not have its own authentic security and foreign policy, and pointed out that it became a periphery under the influence of the US. He particularly objected the EU’s policy towards the Western Balkans, since ‘it did not deal anymore with strengthening institutions, democratization and economic stabilization, but

rather became a consequence of geo-strategic concerns related to NATO's role in the world'.

The party has adopted the concept of military and political neutrality and opposition to Serbian EU membership as its basic political principle. It stressed that there was a fundamental opposition between the Serbian Constitution that defined Kosovo as an inalienable part of Serbia and the decision of 22 EU member states to 'illegally recognize a fake state of Kosovo' (DSS 2011b). Koštunica argued:

The policy of the EU means that the EU actually does not perceive Serbia as a state and its future equal member, but as a territory which can be forcibly cut out. There is not a single European state that has given up part of its territory under pressure or has recognized a violent change of its borders. The rules that apply to all European countries must also apply to Serbia (DSS 2011a).

The party argued that Serbia had to find an alternative for EU membership and advocated 'a new national policy that will have as its main objective Serbia itself and its internal development based on the best European values and standards that are in the interests of our country' (DSS 2011b). It also opposed Serbian EU integration on economic grounds, arguing that the country lost EUR 500 million since the unilateral implementation of the SAA by opening its market for EU products (DSS 2012a). The party claimed that 'the dogmatic Euroenthusiastic policy' therefore led to economic dependence and loss of economic sovereignty, while the policy of finding economic and political alternatives could open up new horizons, markets, partnerships and alliances for the Serbian economy.

This thesis argues that the Democratic Party of Serbia was a specific case of an ideologically driven soft Eurosceptic party that occasionally exhibited hard Eurosceptic rhetoric. The traditionalist and conservative ideology of this party, which gave absolute priority to the issues of national identity and sovereignty over the EU (membership), 'naturally' led this party to express a consistently contingent soft position on Serbian EU accession. In other words, its identity appears to have run counter to the logic of both principled hard Euroscepticism and hard Euroenthusiasm. The party did not express principled opposition to the EU or Serbian EU membership, nor did the party's identity allow for the development of principled Euroenthusiasm. It was therefore ideologically inclined to have a generally critical and 'cautious' approach to the EU in principle, regardless of electoral incentives. Its position on the EU was dependent on other, more

important national and statehood concerns. As a result, the party is characterised by its soft Eurosceptic attitudes towards the EU.

More specifically, the Democratic Party of Serbia's position on the EU resulted from the fact that it was policy-seeking party and that, consequently, its conservative and traditionalist identity decisively determined its stance. It was not prone to shifting stances (including those on the EU) according to strategic electoral incentives and did not significantly change its ideological principles over time (unlike the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party). It did, however, fundamentally modify its position on the EU, but that was the consequence of the crucial shift of EU policy towards Serbia (by *de facto* supporting Kosovo's independence) than a strategic party decision to so. In other words, the Democratic Party of Serbia appears to have been a value-based party that prioritised its programmatic principles and national politics, even when faced with a sharply declining support from its electorate. Bakić (Interview 2011) thus argued in an interview that electoral success was not the most important goal for Koštunica, who 'insufficiently rationally perceived reality' and was rather 'persistent and stubborn' when implementing principled politics. This was confirmed by Koštunica himself, who stated:

There are sometimes exceptional situations in politics, when the fate of the whole country and the people is at stake, which leaves no room for compromise, but rather necessitates the principled, consistent and resolute defence of state and national interests. [...] Acceptance of [Western] requests [in relation to Kosovo and EU membership] is not politics of compromise, but agreeing to self-denial and self-abolition (DSS 2012a, p.7).

Consequently, this party's position on the EU was a reflection of deep conviction that the territorial integrity, sovereignty as well as protection of national identity were prime values that had an absolute priority over issues of the EU and EU membership. Koštunica pointed out that that Kosovo was not just a territory, but 'the issue of national identity and culture, historical backbone of Serbian people, and the origin of Serbian state and the Serbian church' (DSS, 2012a). The party thus tried to position itself as an authoritative interpreter of the principles of national politics and its negative attitudes towards the EU were grounded in its traditionalist and national identity.

However, the Democratic Party of Serbia was not essentially a party with an anti-European ideology. It criticised, but did not object the whole project of European integration, nor did it advocate an alternative form of cooperation among European nations. Its opposition to Serbian EU accession was a consequence of complex political relations in the Western

Balkans, as well as the violent breakup of the former Yugoslav federation. Party officials also underlined its European orientation based on old European, conservative heritage and values, such as commitment to the rule of law, market economy, and family and Christian values, and that 'Serbia must democratize and reform according to best European standards' (Samardžić, Interview 2011). In summary, the Democratic Party of Serbia was a prime example of ideologically motivated positioning on the EU.

Conversely, the Serbian Progressive Party was primarily characterised by its lack of deeper ideological conviction and pronounced pragmatism. As a consequence, it underwent a fundamental and rapid transformation of both its ideology and attitudes towards the EU. Even though the party leaders had expressed pronounced Euroscepticism for almost twenty years within the Serbian Radical Party (with occasionally moderated rhetoric in the mid-2000s), they founded the Serbian Progressive Party on a radically new, pro-European platform and became firm advocates of Serbian EU membership in 2008. The party programme (SNS 2011, p.41) clearly stated that the party supported the European integration process aimed at the institutional and economic strengthening of Serbia, and that it believed that Serbian EU accession was in the best, long-term interests of all citizens.

However, the Serbian Progressive Party did not express attitudes towards the substance of European integration. The only document that broadly revealed its stance on this issue was the cooperation agreement with, interestingly, the notoriously Eurosceptic Austrian Freedom Party. The agreement specifically stated that the two parties support 'the creation of a Europe of free nations and self-determined people in the framework of a grouping of national sovereign states' (SNS-FPO 2011). They required the preservation of national identities, including the Western traditions of Christianity, humanism and the Enlightenment, as well as 'the effective protection of Europe against the guardianship of imperialist superpowers [arguably the USA]'. These parties also stood for a fight against globalisation and 'the infiltration of religious fanaticism into European society'. It seems, therefore, that the Serbian Progressive Party stood for a radical transformation of the EU and intergovernmental, rather than supranational, cooperation among sovereign European states based on opposition to presumably American imperialism and Muslim fundamentalism. This, however, has never been stated in any of the party's documents and public rhetoric, and it remained unclear to what extent it actually adhered to this concept.

In summary, this party was characterised as strongly strategically driven and soft Euroenthusiastic (Table 3.1), since there were no indications in the party programmatic documents and rhetoric of any ideologically motivated stances on the EU. The support for Serbian EU membership was couched in instrumental and utilitarian terms, since the party perceived the EU primarily as a key economic partner that could contribute to a better life for ordinary people (SNS 2011). Importantly, the Serbian Progressive Party was not fully ideologically profiled, its programme was not a reflection of any clear ideological concept (besides the fact that it is not on the radical right) and consequently it could not have ideologically driven attitudes to the EU. On the other side, there was evidence that the decision of the leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party to start advocating Serbian accession to the EU and undergo ideological transformation was highly pragmatic, which is examined in detail in Chapter 4. In essence, adopting a radically new attitude towards the EU and moving away from its long-term anti-European political legacy can be primarily interpreted as the result of electoral tactics to come to power and obtain 'European legitimacy'.

Finally, the party programme of New Serbia stated its attitudes towards the substance of European integration. It argued that the party sought to join and strengthen European institutions by supporting the transformation of the European Union from 'a commercial society' to 'political society' (NS 2010, p.3). The ultimate goal of this party was 'a federal Europe based on the solidarity and unity of nations and citizens, in which all nations would preserve their national and cultural identity' (NS 2010, p.3). However, there were no indications that the party was really embedded in these principles, given an absolute lack of any reference to the substance of European integration in its rhetoric and practical policies.

On the other hand, the party changed attitudes towards Serbian EU integration twice since 2008 and was, therefore, a prime example of a party driven by strategic and tactical electoral considerations when it comes to its stances on Serbian EU membership. Specifically, the 2005 programme of New Serbia (NS 2010, p.3) expressed its pro-European orientation stating that the party believed Serbia belongs to 'the United Europe not only geopolitically, but also because of its entire history and cultural heritage'. It thus supported Serbian EU membership until the 2008 Kosovo's declaration of independence, when it took a strong Eurosceptic position and argued against Serbian accession into the EU. It opposed the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and accused the government of betraying crucial national interests. However, it again shifted stances on this

issue in 2010, abandoned the coalition with the Democratic Party of Serbia and returned to a pro-EU position, primarily due to a fear of political marginalisation. This decision was solely pragmatic and strategic.

This thesis argues that New Serbia was essentially a mostly strategically motivated soft Eurosceptic party. It shifted positions and expressed a purely tactically driven approach to Serbian EU membership. However, its traditionalist and conservative ideology also predisposes it to be generally sceptical toward the EU. This was most visible in the fact that senior party officials were emotionally deeply against the EU, given ‘the negative consequences of EU policy for the Balkans’ as pointed out by the party vice president Jovan Marić (Interview 2011) in an interview. New Serbia may therefore also be seen as ideologically driven to some extent, although electoral incentives did prevail in its responses to Europe.

### **3.4.3 Christian democrats and the EU**

The Croatian Democratic Union changed stances significantly on the EU and Croatian membership in the EU in the early 2000s in an effort to transform from a fundamentally nationalist and radical right party to a moderate, conservative Christian democratic and crucially pro-European party.

Until the early 2000s, the party position on Europe was clearly Eurosceptic, with elements of both soft and hard scepticism. Although never ideologically anti-Western, party policies demonstrated substantial and deep disagreement with the essence of the EU and European integration. This party at that time argued that Croatia was a core European country and that in historic terms the ‘Balkan episode’ was just a very short one, when compared to its belonging to the West for centuries (Jović 2006). It did not explicitly oppose Croatian EU accession, but it pursued a nationalist political agenda and had a pronounced negative stance on EU policy towards Croatia and the Western Balkans, as well as the conditions for Croatian accession to the EU, primarily the country’s cooperation with the ICTY (Jović 2006). It strongly opposed the EU’s regional approach and the concept of the ‘Western Balkans’ and particularly feared the restoration of a new Yugoslavia.<sup>12</sup> Jović (2006, p.89) argued that Tudjmanist ‘scepticism and hostility towards the concept of Europe’ was primarily based on criticising Europe for not helping Croatia when it was attacked in the

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<sup>12</sup> This was reflected in the Croatian Constitution that was amended to include an explicit prohibition ‘to initiate any procedure for the association of the Republic of Croatia into alliances with other states if such an association leads, or might lead, to a renewal of a South Slav state community or to any Balkan state form of any kind’ (USUD 2011).

post-Yugoslav wars and assist Croatia on its road from 'the Balkans' to 'Europe'. He also claimed that Tudjman perceived Europe as an 'artificial creation', a project based on the unrealistic idealism and unworkable principles of multinational 'federations'. Tudjman also argued that Europe was based on an illusion that a new European culture, which will replace the existing small identities, would emerge and that any new, federal Europe is as unlikely as a federal Yugoslavia (Jović 2006). This party's Eurosceptic policy of nationalism and isolationism throughout the 1990s was therefore primarily ideologically driven.

As a consequence, the fundamental change in party attitudes towards the EU in the early 2000 following the death of its founder and ideologue, Tudjman, can be mostly explained by strategic and pragmatic considerations and intra-party dynamics, as examined in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, the party has largely remained pro-European ever since. Its 2002 programme (HDZ 2002) stated, 'the priority of Croatia is accession to the EU, which has proven to be the core of a stable peace, freedom and high living standards'. Its newly discovered Euroenthusiastic position was therefore primarily visible in the fact that it strongly pursued the policy of Croatian EU accession, which the Croatian Democratic Union-led government successfully secured in 2011. The 2002 programme also contained references to party attitudes towards the substance of the European integration. The party, specifically, was not opposed to further extensions of EU competencies, although this has never been further elaborated nor has it become prominent in its political agenda. The programme explicitly stated that:

A united Europe has a chance only if it is based on enlightened and firm self-understanding of each nation and the preservation of their national identities. The unity of Europe should be based on the principles of respect for diversity, partnership and equality. The Croatian Democratic Union, like other European peoples' parties, advocates that the devolution of powers to supranational institutions or organizations can be realized only on the principle of subsidiarity, so that national competencies would not be unnecessarily internationalized (HDZ 2002, p.28).

This thesis therefore characterises this party's position on the EU as soft Euroenthusiastic (Table 3.1). However, it is more difficult to assess the extent to which its Euroenthusiasm became an element of party identity, following a strategic reorientation in the early 2000s. It appears that over the years, the party has become somewhat grounded in the Christian democratic concept of Europe largely under the influence of members of the European Peoples' Party (as discussed in Chapter 7). The Croatian Democratic Union was fully committed to Croatian EU integration and the 'spiritual and cultural heritage of the



Croatian people and a party of common European civilisation and cultural heritage' (HDZ, 2002). On the other hand, it seems that permanent features of this party include internal tensions between moderate and nationalist factions as well as a strong nationalist legacy, seen in the renewed party adherence to the fundamental values pursued by its founder and ideologue, Franjo Tuđman (most visible since the election of the new party president, Tomislav Karamarko, in 2012). In addition, the party's decision to form a coalition with the hard Eurosceptic and radical right Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević for the 2013 European elections in Croatia may be a good indicator of its (less Euroenthusiastic) underlying position on the EU and ideological repositioning towards more national pole.

#### **3.4.4 Agrarians and the EU**

The Croatian Peasants' Party was characterised here as a mostly ideologically driven, broadly soft Eurosceptic party that at some times expressed a more Euroenthusiastic position. It generally supported Croatian EU integration and did not demonstrate principled opposition to the EU. However, the party did often employ Eurosceptic rhetoric, and has never been a hard enthusiast for Croatian EU accession and the EU in general. This was due to its core values, which were of a conservative, Christian democrat and agrarian nature, so it consequently prioritised the protection of national identity, traditional family values and agriculture. It did not have an elaborated position on the substance of the EU, although it expressed sceptic attitudes towards the common agricultural policy of the EU. However, the party also argued for greater European monetary integration and control of the banking system, as well as stronger fiscal integration and control of the budgetary policies of member states, which were 'the achievements of European development that Croatia must accept' (Index 2012).

However, this party openly worried over the position of the Croatian agricultural and fishing industry in the EU, given that 'farmers, fishermen and small businesses will be the most endangered by EU accession' (HSS 2009). Its former president, Josip Friščić, explained that he did not want to 'rush into the EU without protecting our national interests' and added, 'I have yet to hear what concrete benefits we get from EU entry' (HSS 2007). The party believed that 'Croatia's accession into the global integration processes is necessary', but the country must also preserve its natural resources and national identity (HSS 2009). The party vice president, Marijana Petir (Interview 2011), explained in an interview that this party supported joining the EU, but also expressed concerns that Croatia 'uncritically accepted everything that the EU demanded'. She referred to the

concerns and doubts of the party's core voters, which were mainly farmers and craftsmen, about the EU and how it would impact on them. The party therefore argued for 'the postponement of the sale of agricultural land to foreigners at least 12 years after joining the EU' (HSS 2009).

### **3.4.5 Liberals and the EU**

All three liberal parties in Serbia and Croatia have consistently been the strongest advocates of these countries' European integration as well as close cooperation of European states, and are characterised as hard Euroenthusiasts (Table 3.1). Since it was founded, G17 Plus was part of all Serbian governments as a firm supporter of the country's EU integration. The party's programme specified 'Serbia is already a part of Europe, historically, culturally, economically and [even] emotionally, but not institutionally', so the party's main goal was to achieve EU membership as soon as possible (G17 Plus 2004, p.12). In late 2000, the G17 plus 'discovered' decentralisation and regionalisation as a political niche not filled by other parties and pragmatically focused on it as the party's most fundamental principle. As a result, it subordinated all elements of its programme to decentralisation and formed a union of regional parties in 2010, which became 'the United Regions of Serbia' party in 2013. The United Regions of Serbia remained principled Euroenthusiasts. The party believed that 'EU membership is in the strategic interests of Serbia. To this end, the party will be dedicated to fulfilling European standards and introducing European principles and values' (URS 2013).

Although not having elaborated a position on the substance of the European integration, its programme explicitly declared, 'the party recognizes and respects the values and standards built into the original founding principles of the EU as civilization achievements, independent of political interpretation and crises' (URS 2013). In addition, it particularly emphasised the party's support for the EU, which 'is a decentralized and democratic society based on the philosophy of 'Euroregionalism' as a form of cross-border cooperation of neighbouring areas, district or region' (URS 2013). What is notable for this party, however, is that it strategically changed its ideology within the United Regions of Serbia, becoming less explicitly neoliberal in socio-economic terms. Given the party's pragmatic nature and its search for electorally profitable topics (such as decentralisation), this party may be seen as primarily strategically driven. Nevertheless, as with the Democratic Party, its position on the EU was consistent and rather ideologically motivated (but not strongly related to any particular ideological concept).

The Liberal Democratic Party, the most liberal party in both socio-economic and identity terms, has always been the strongest proponent of European integration among Serbian political parties and as well as an advocate of a complete societal and political ‘volte-face’ based on rapid modernisation and accession to the EU. The interviewed senior party officials confirmed, for example, that, although in opposition, the Liberal Democratic Party supported parliament legislation aimed at harmonising Serbian laws with EU rules and regulations (Andrić, Interview 2011; Prokić, Interview 2011). Its 2012 manifesto entitled ‘The turnaround’ (LDP 2012) argued that EU membership was a key tool for modernisation and it therefore pledged ‘to fight for creating Europe in Serbia and Serbia in Europe, instead of the illusion that we are to survive as an isolated island’. Its manifesto also stated, ‘the first and fundamental prerequisite for economic development in Serbia is the unconditional continuation of the process of EU integration’ that will create conditions for developing ‘a normal society’ (LDP 2012). It was the only relevant party that advocated immediate accession to NATO, which ‘will bring a permanent peace in the Balkans’ (LDP 2012). The party, however, did not publicly express a stance on the substance of the European integration.

Finally, the Croatian People’s Party-Liberal Democrats proclaimed in its programme that immediate EU accession should be the most important national interest and an absolute priority for Croatian foreign policy, and argued that it was strongly and unreservedly committed to fulfilling all the accession criteria (HNS 2011). Its fundamental principle was ‘striving for standards of European civilization’ since ‘the EU provides a framework for social and economic development’ (HNS 2012). The party believed that Croatian membership in the EU is the best long-term guarantee for the realisation of Croatian national interests, whereas ‘the survival, durability and stability of the state and the institutions are absolutely the most important advantages of Croatian EU accession’ (HNS 2012). Like the Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia, this party did not publicly express its position on the substance of the EU, but given its firm Euroenthusiastic ideology, it is reasonable to assume that is rather positive. Like the Serbian Liberal Democratic Party, this Croatian party was, therefore, predominantly an ideologically driven, hard Euroenthusiastic party.

In summary, these parties appear to confirm Von Beyme’s (1985, p.39) argument that the liberals have been most emphatic parties in declaring their support for a united Europe. Their liberal ideology did not put emphasis on state sovereignty and nations, but rather

individuals, their rights and a minimal role of the state; as such, these parties were prone to accepting supranational organisations and were most enthusiastic about the EU. As Hanley (2008, p.117) also noted, liberal ideology was the most predisposed to transnational structures.

### **3.4.6 Radical right parties and the EU**

Both radical right parties examined here, the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights, have been key opponents of the EU in these countries and, given their pronounced radical right ideology, are characterised as ideologically driven, hard Eurosceptic parties. Radical right identity seemed to provide a framework through which these parties perceived their role in society and determined their key attitudes and policies, including those regarding the EU. Mudde (2007, p.181) specifically argued that in radical right parties ‘ideology is clearly more important, although it often overlaps with strategy’. He further explained that the predominance of nativism<sup>13</sup> in their ideology was a reason for their negative views on the EU.

The Serbian Radical Party has been the strongest and most consistent opponent of Serbian EU integration and the EU in general. The Radicals objected to the very nature of the EU and supranational cooperation among European states. Following the 2008 outbreak of the financial crisis, the party particularly attempted to present the EU as ‘a political, economic and moral corpse’ and failed experiment of the Western European elites, as its senior official Dejan Mirović (Interview 2011) argued in an interview. Mirović specifically pointed out that ‘the EU is only useful for Western European members, while it is absolutely useless for Eastern Europe. The very existence of the EU is the result of the interests of the largest exporters and, in any case, it is not in the interest of small nations’.

Former senior party official Aleksandar Martinović (Interview 2011) specified in an interview that this party was in favour of the ‘De Gaulle principle of a Europe of nations from the Urals to the Atlantic’ that would crucially include Russia, and that its preferable form of European organisation was Europol and the Council of Europe. Interestingly, the Radicals also criticised the EU’s institutional setting on the grounds that it was not democratic. Mirović (Interview 2011) asserted that the European Parliament was a second-rate institution, while the European Council was an undemocratic body, given that ‘there is

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<sup>13</sup> Mudde (2007, p.19) characterised nativism as an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group and that non-native elements are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state.

not a similar system in the world, where the laws are passed by the ministers' and concluded that 'the EU is a too cumbersome and bureaucratic organisation that has lost the purpose of its existence'.

In addition, the party expressed 'an absolute and unconditional opposition to Serbian EU integration' (Mirović, Interview 2011), particularly after the 2008 unilateral declaration of Kosovo independence had been supported by key EU member states. In its political testament, the party's authoritarian leader, Vojislav Šešelj, called on party members to 'strongly oppose any attempts to include Serbia in NATO and the EU, because all the traditional Serbian enemies are there' (Komšić 2007, p.14). He went on to argue, 'they [members of the EU] have been furious with us because the Serbs had defeated their grandfathers and ancestors who therefore left a testament to their heirs to punish Serbia' (Komšić 2007, p.16). This party firmly opposed the conditions for Serbian EU integration, especially the extradition of suspected war criminals to the ICTY, which indicted its leader for war crimes. It called on the government to suspend all negotiations with the EU and 'to give up the disastrous policies of European integration and turn to the countries that respect international law and territorial integrity of our country' (SRS 2010). It was also the only relevant party that advocated Serbian membership of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a military alliance of a number of former Soviet republics. The Serbian Radical Party's opposition to Serbian integration into the EU and the EU itself was therefore principled and ideologically driven, given that the party was deeply grounded in the pronounced ideology of anti-Westernism. The party's programmatic documents as well as rhetoric demonstrated a deep-seated animosity and hatred towards the EU and the West in general, as well as embedded prejudice and hostility towards other nations. In other words, as a radical right and nationalist party, whose vision of a Greater Serbia was incompatible with the values underpinning the process of European integration, the Serbian Radical Party was a hard Eurosceptic party and a consistent ideological opponent of the EU and Serbian EU membership.

On the other hand, the Croatian Party of Rights did not demonstrate anti-Westernism, but rather ideologically driven nationalism and anti-Yugoslavism, the core element of which was principled opposition to both EU and Croatian EU membership. The party's 1991 founding fundamental principles specifically proclaimed strong opposition to any inter-state unions or supranational organisation, arguing, 'any form of state union with other countries and nations is unacceptable, without the consent of the Croatian people whose

fundamental right is to have a fully sovereign and independent state (HSP 2012). Therefore, the Croatian Party of Rights believed that accession to any state union that would endanger Croatian sovereignty was unacceptable and unnecessary, given the Croats' nine-century struggle for independence (HSP 2010).

More specifically, the party argued that its fundamental value is decentralisation, so it strongly opposed 'the centralization that has absolutely gained momentum in the EU' (HSP 2013a). Party leaders thus claimed that 'the aim of European bureaucracy is to subdue the independent and sovereign state' and that the EU was not a community of states, but rather a centralised system of wealth extraction from the periphery to the centre, which destroys the economies of small countries (HSP 2013b). It therefore pledged 'to fight against a federal Europe' (HSP 2013a). It also appears that the values underpinning the EU run counter to the party's traditionalist, conservative identity given its argument that 'EU policies and regulations aim to achieve uniformity that destroys the family as well as identity, sovereignty and democracy', and has devastating effects on the Catholic values supported by the vast majority of the Croatian population (HSP 2013b).

Similarly, despite moderated rhetoric in the mid-2000s, the party essentially and principally opposed Croatian EU membership. In early 2011, 'when the negative results of the accession negotiations had become public', the Croatian Party of Rights adopted a policy of outright opposition to Croatian EU membership and called on Croatian citizens to vote against it at a referendum on EU accession, as confirmed by party leader Daniel Srb (Interview 2011) in an interview. Its opposition was couched in both economic and political terms. The party argued that EU accession was not in Croatia's economic interests and that would have very negative economic consequences. This party claimed, 'Croatia will be gravely affected by settlements of the foreigners as well as resettlement of Croatia's young, most qualified people. We will become a political and economic colony and most of the Croatian farmers and fishermen will be doomed' (HSP 2013d). Given its pronounced nationalist ideology and opposition to 'the re-emerging concept of Greater Serbia' (Srb 2011), this party particularly opposed 'regional cooperation' and 'good neighbourly relations' which were requirements for Croatian EU accession. This was seen as 'revitalisation of 'Serb dominated Yugo-sphere' as well as 'criminal Yugo-communist legacy', which was a serious threat for the newly independent Croatia (Srb 2011).

Its position on the substance of the European integration seemed to be embedded in its conservative, nationalist and, what Mudde (2007) called, nativist identity focused on the homogenous nation-state. One of its twelve fundamental principles specifically stated that ‘supranational communities are a grave danger to small states, because they arithmetically do not allow for any impact of these states and they are not democratic, since their actions are not legitimized by the will of the people’ (HSP 2013c). The party also advocated ‘an organic approach’ to society, since ‘every nation is an organic community with its own consciousness, traditions and destiny’ (HSP 2013c), which appear to be contrary to the liberal values of individualism and freedoms that underpin modern European societies and the EU itself. The Croatian Party of Rights is therefore characterised as an ideologically driven, hard Eurosceptic party in Table 3.1.

### **3.4.7 An overview of party ideology and attitudes towards the EU in Serbia and Croatia**

As argued in Section 3.3, the key characteristic of a majority of Serbian and some Croatian parties is that they were generally weakly ideologically rooted and predominantly strategically driven parties, which had consequences for their positions on the EU. Namely, a number of parties did not have ideologically motivated stances on the EU, given the lack of genuine fundamental values and identity, or an eclectic mix of different ideological principles. These were primarily the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and, to a great extent, the Croatian Democratic Union and New Serbia. These essentially pragmatic parties shifted their stance on the EU and their countries’ EU membership as a direct consequence of their strategically driven ideological transformations. They changed their stances as a means for fulfilling more practical and short-term objectives, such as coming to power and getting legitimisation in the eyes of the West, which will be discussed in Chapter 7. In other words, there was limited evidence that these parties, with a pronounced Eurosceptic political legacy, fully embraced European values and it is doubtful that their soft Europeanism was a reflection of deeper ideological beliefs.

On the other hand, this chapter did find that the majority of parties appeared to express more ideologically and value-driven positions on the EU, despite the general lack of parties’ ideological underpinning. This paradox was most visible in the cases of the Democratic Party and G17 Plus/United Regions of Serbia which, as pragmatic and strategically driven parties, adopted principled Euroenthusiasm as a core element of their overall identities and ‘world views’. However, their approach to the EU was not related to any firmly rooted

ideology. As such, they constituted the prime examples of generally strategically motivated parties that adopted principled positions on the EU. Additionally, a number of parties were ideologically driven (although only a few had a coherent ideological profile related to both the socio-economic left-right and identity issues). Consequently, these parties adopted mostly ideologically based positions on the EU, which was the case with the Democratic Party of Serbia, Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia, Social Democratic Party of Croatia, Croatian Peasants' Party and the radical right family.<sup>14</sup> These parties thus remained insulated from the logic and patterns of party competition and other strategic incentives to adjust their broad, underlying stances on the EU, as discussed in Chapter 4. However, the way they used EU issues in domestic party competition and, in some cases, their stances on EU membership of their countries appear to have been strategically and tactically driven.

For parties that were mostly ideologically driven, their position on the cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism dimension (unlike on the socio-economic left-right dimension) accounted for their stances on the EU. Figure 3.1 presents the attitudes of Serbian and Croatian parties towards the EU and their position on the socio-economic left-right axis. A left-right division was not always clear-cut in these countries and almost all parties advocated leftist and egalitarian socio-economic principles, including parties that were the most radical right on identity issues. In other words, these parties tended to avoid competing on this dimension and were overwhelmingly positioned in the centre or left-of-centre (which may be seen as a result of the lack of politically articulated socio-economic interests of different social groups). As a consequence, parties' position on this dimension was less relevant for their attitudes towards the substance of the European integration.

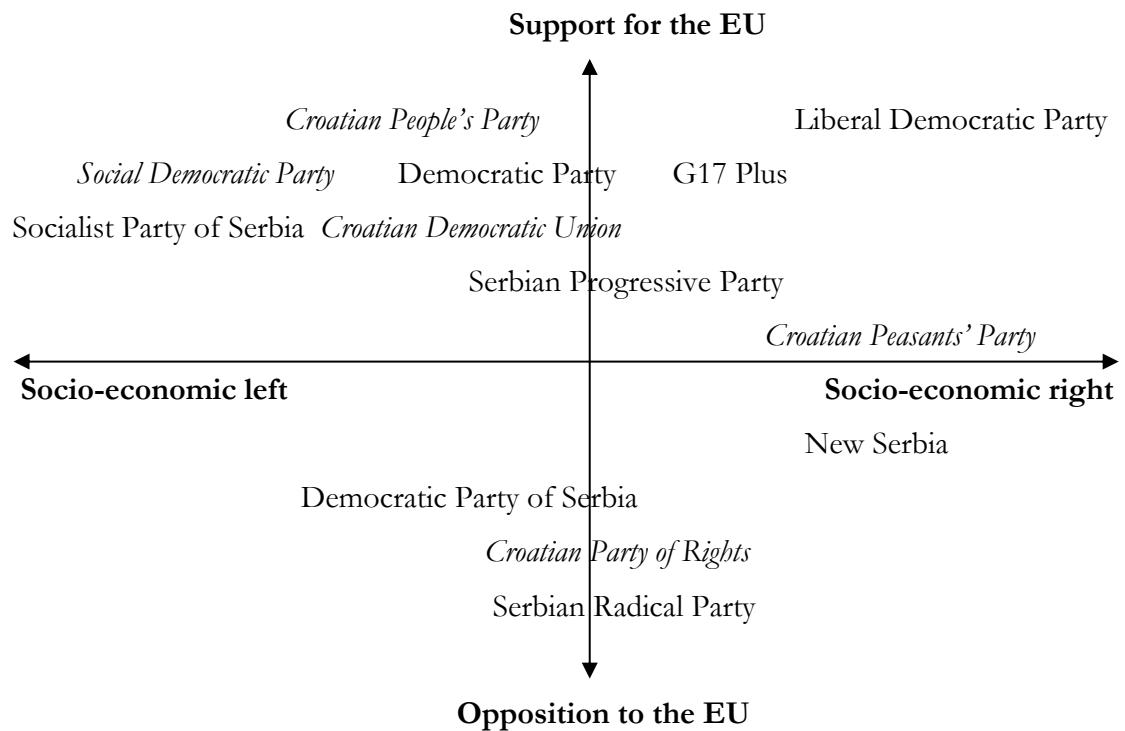
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<sup>14</sup> Parties that changed their stances on the EU (Serbian Progressive Party, Socialist Party of Serbia, Croatian Democratic Union) also appear to have had ideologically motivated stances prior to the strategically driven transformation of their ideologies and positions on the EU, as discussed in Chapter 4.



Figure 3.1: Attitudes towards the EU and ideological position of Serbian and Croatian parties on the socio-economic left-right dimension

Sources: Party programmes and interviews with party officials



Note: Croatian parties are in Italics

Empirically, parties characterised as Euroenthusiastic were located across the whole left-right spectrum in socio-economic terms, from the neoliberal Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia to the social democratic Socialist Party of Serbia and the Social Democratic Party of Croatia. In addition, parties termed Eurosceptic (the Serbian Radical Party, the Croatian Party of Rights and the Democratic Party of Serbia) had a rather centrist position with strong leftist elements in their programmes or an eclectic mix of mutually opposing stances on socio-economic issues, as in the case of the Radicals. Enthusiasm and scepticism for the EU did not seem to be driven by party stances on socio-economic issues and had less to do with party stances on the issue stemming from the left-right socio-economic dimension of party competition in these two countries. As a consequence, the bottom left and right quadrants were not populated by any party with deeply grounded stances on these issues. As shown earlier, due to the historical development and political nature of these societies, there were no radical left parties that would, for instance, oppose the EU for its neoliberal nature. Similarly, no radical right parties embedded in the socio-economic right, which would oppose the EU on its socialist characteristics, were identified. Eurosceptic parties across both countries were rather indifferent to the EU in socio-economic terms, although they increasingly started objecting to EU membership on the grounds that it would have

deleterious effects on national economies since the 2008 financial crisis. Parties in these countries, including those whose positions may be interpreted as ideologically driven, mainly viewed the EU through the prism of EU membership or policies towards the former Yugoslavia – policies that were not essentially related to the issues stemming from the left-right socio-economic dimension of party competition.

Conversely, there was a dominance of the social cleavages that stemmed from a division between the nationalism vs. cosmopolitanism in these societies: these strongly impacted party stances on the EU. As Figure 3.2 shows, the nationalism vs. cosmopolitanism aspect of the GAL-TAN axis neatly reflected party stances on the EU. Parties that strongly advocated individualism in opposition to the state, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, an open society based on democracy and the respect of human rights, such as the Liberal Democratic Party, G17 plus and the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats, were the most pronounced Euroenthusiasts. Eurosceptic parties were all traditionalist and national parties, with hard Eurosceptics (the Serbian Radical Party, Croatian Party of Rights) being pronounced nationalist and authoritarian radical right parties. In other words, traditionalism and nationalism mostly bred isolationism and opposition to the EU, although the case of the Croatian Democratic Union also showed that traditionalism can be accommodated with Euroenthusiasm (the latter was strategically driven, though). Serbian and Croatian parties, therefore, projected their stances on issues of sovereignty, democracy, traditional values, human rights and, crucially, national identity onto the EU, which was primarily perceived as a political, rather than economic, reality. The notable absence of any party in the bottom-left quadrant – that is, the lack of any libertarian, green, post-material or radical left Eurosceptic parties – was a reflection of the nature of these countries, where social conditions did not give rise to the development of modern post-material societies and parties, particularly those that would oppose the EU.

Figure 3.2: Attitudes towards the EU and ideological position of Serbian and Croatian parties on the cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism dimension

Sources: Party programmes and interviews with party officials

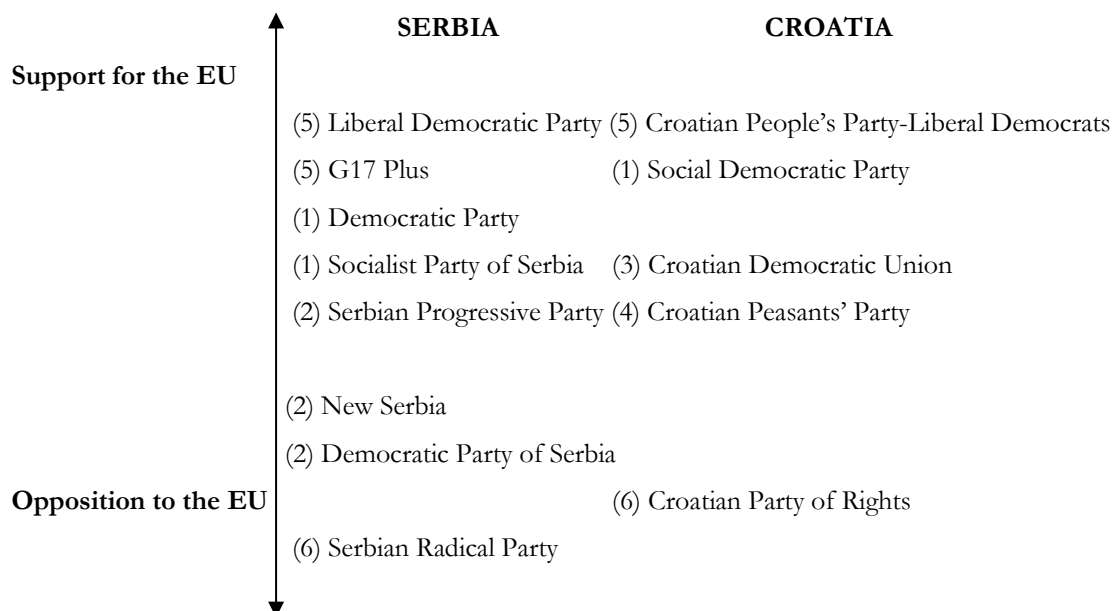


Note: Croatian parties are in Italics

Figure 3.3 summarises party stances on the EU and their ideological party families. At first glance, the figure suggests that parties from the same party family expressed the same or similar stances on the EU in these two countries. While the liberal family stood out as principled hard Euroenthusiastic, the radical right family adopted principled hard Eurosceptic positions. Between the two opposing poles were the social democratic family, which expressed consistently higher levels of Euroenthusiasm than the conservative, Christian democrat and agrarian families, which were characterised by strong traditionalism and pronounced concern for national issues. However, the study also found that parties from the same ideological family expressed different positions on Europe. Conservative parties had a wide range of attitudes, spanning from strong rejection (the Democratic Party of Serbia) to support for Serbian EU membership (the Serbian Progressive Party, New Serbia). Similarly, social democrats were all Euroenthusiastic, but their position was rather strategically driven (the Socialist Party of Serbia) or not based on elaborated ideological principles (the Democratic Party), which showed that their orientation was not necessary grounded in social democratic ideology. Moreover, the ideological grouping of these parties into party families was largely conditional, given that they were mostly ideologically

ungrounded, especially in terms of socio-economic left-right division. Therefore, belonging to a particular family cannot be considered a factor that decisively or significantly shaped party positions in a certain way in Serbia and Croatia. However, two party families were the outliers, namely the liberal and radical right, since they uniformly and consistently supported and opposed the EU, respectively, throughout the analysed period. This may, to some extent, be the result of their ideological convictions and consequent belonging to these party families. Nevertheless, party family did not generally prove to be a reliable indicator of party stances on the EU.

Figure 3.3: Support for/opposition to the EU by party families in Serbia and Croatia  
*Sources:* Party programmes and interviews with party officials



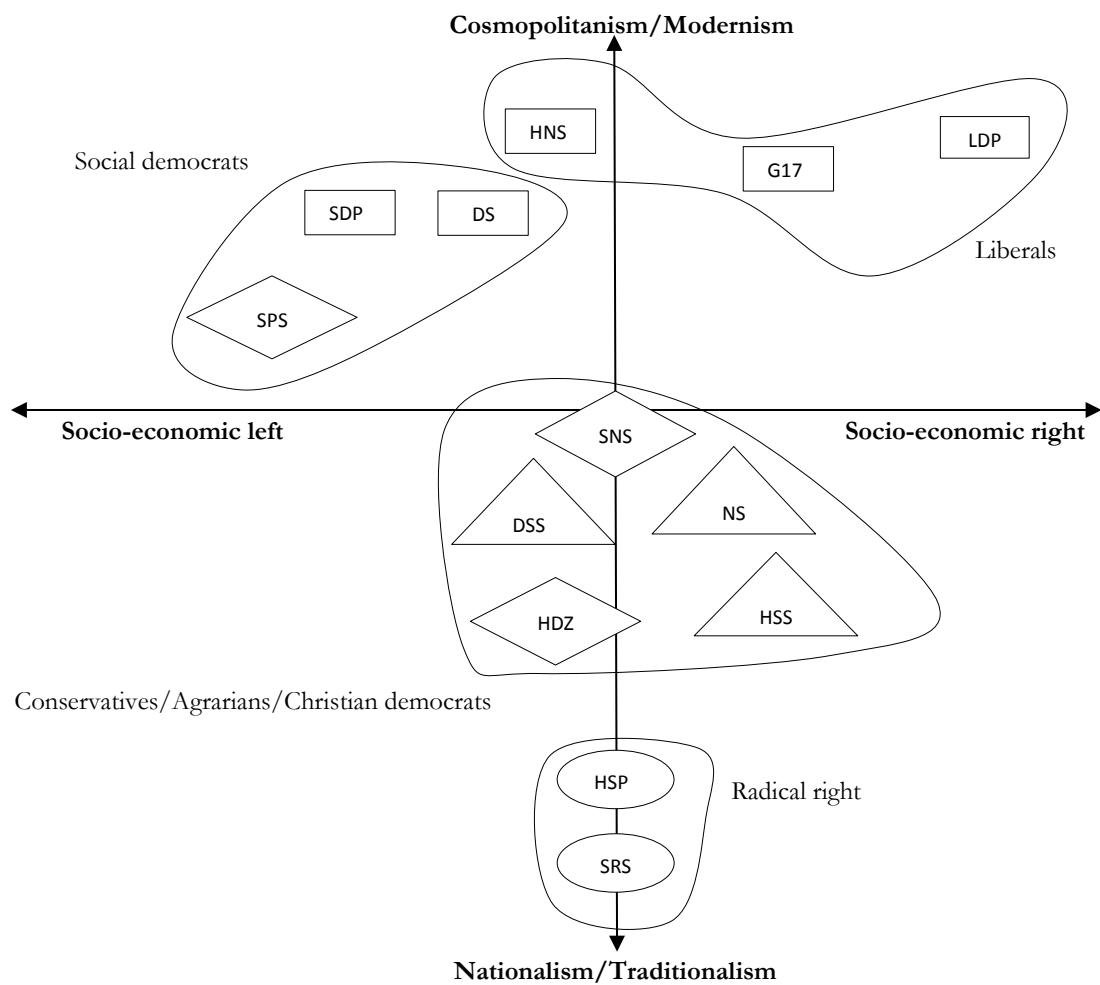
*Note:* Party families: (1) social democrat, (2) conservative, (3) Christian democrat, (4) agrarian, (5) liberal and (6) radical right

Finally, the two most important dimensions of party competition, party families and party positions on the EU in both countries are presented in Figure 3.4. All the striking features of individual parties and both party systems, as discussed in this chapter, are visible in this figure. Specifically, very few parties adopted a socio-economic rightist political platform and the majority of parties were located around the political centre. The pragmatic nature and the absence of any deeper ideological profiling are visible in the central position across both dimensions taken by the Serbian Progressive Party. The dominance of the GAL vs. TAN axis, specifically the cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism dimension, is also evident given the parties' position along the full spectrum of this axis. This dimension was crucial for party positioning on the EU, since both soft and hard Eurosceptic parties were close to the

TAN pole that shaped party-based Euroscepticism across both countries. Conversely, both pro- and anti-EU parties were located towards the centre of socio-economic left-right axis. Moreover, the conservative family (presented together with similar Christian democratic and agrarian families) and radical right families were significantly more Eurosceptic than social democratic and liberal families.

Figure 3.4: Dimension of party competition, party families and positions on European integration in Serbia and Croatia

Sources: Marks et al. (2006), party programmes, interviews with party officials



*Acronyms:* DS-Democratic Party, DSS-Democratic Party of Serbia, NS-New Serbia, SRS-Serbian Radical Party, SPS-Socialist Party of Serbia, LDP-Liberal Democratic Party, SNS-Serbian Progressive Party, HDZ-Croatian Democratic Union, SDP-Social Democratic Party, HNS-Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats, HSS-Croatian Peasants' Party, HSP-Croatian Party of Rights

### 3.5 Conclusion

On the basis of the analysis of Serbian and Croatian parties' ideologies and their responses to Europe presented above, it is possible to draw a number of conclusions. This chapter first and foremost argues that ideology was a key factor that determined broad, underlying positions on the EU for the majority of Serbian and Croatian parties. This may seem a paradox, given that the majority of parties were generally loosely ideologically grounded. However, the specific nature of European issues in the context of these post-communist and post-conflict societies triggered predominantly ideologically driven responses to Europe, as explained below. As a result, parties formed stances on the EU primarily based on their attitudes towards identity issues – that is, their position on the cosmopolitanism vs. nationalism dimension – while location on the socio-economic left-right axis and belonging to party families were less relevant for their positioning on the EU. This pattern of support for and opposition to the EU was the result of the structure of party competition, since party stances on European integration essentially reflected the dominant patterns of domestic politics across both countries, as presented in Figure 3.4. These propositions are further discussed in this concluding section.

The thesis did not find evidence in the examined cases to support the H1a hypothesis *that the more parties express socio-economic radical right or radical left ideology, the more likely that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. Euroenthusiastic parties were both left- and right-wing in socio-economic terms while Eurosceptic parties, including those with hard Eurosceptic positions, did not have embedded stances on socio-economic issues and were rather positioned in the centre, with leftist elements in their socio-economic programmes (Figure 3.1). In other words, the ideological preferences of Serbian and Croatian parties on the traditional socio-economic left-right axis were not translated into specific stances on the EU. This was primarily the result of the fact that any left-right ideological distinction was very blurred in these societies, given the tendency of the majority of parties to express leftist socio-economic rhetoric and policies.<sup>15</sup> Crucially, the class cleavages that give rise to party competition on this dimension were not dominant in these societies. In other words, there was a lack of politically articulated social and economic interests of distinct social groups (which, however, does not mean that they did not objectively have them). Consequently, parties perceived the EU almost exclusively as a political, not an economic, reality. The

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<sup>15</sup> This was not a unique characteristic of Serbian and Croatian parties (the same may be seen in other Central and Eastern European countries), although it was quite pronounced in these countries, given their historical experiences since the early 1990s as well as parties' emphasis on national and statehood issues.

empirical data considered in this study, therefore, did not support the arguments of a number of authors (Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002) that argued for a strong relationship between the conventional left-right dimension and party positioning on European integration.

However, the evidence from the study strongly supported the H1b hypothesis *that the more parties express a TAN (traditional/authoritarian/nationalist) based ideology, the more likely that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes (compared to parties closer to a GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) pole)*. This dimension appeared to be crucial in understanding party positioning on the EU in these countries, given that party attitudes towards the EU essentially matched party locations on this axis (Figure 3.2). This was a consequence of the fact that in both countries, ‘the ideological cultural cleavage’ (Čular and Gregurić 2007), based on the divide between traditionalist and conservative values on one side, and liberal, secular modernist concepts on the other, has been by far the most dominant. Consequently, parties perceived the EU through the prism of EU membership or EU policies towards the former Yugoslavia, which were closely related to the identity and value issues stemming from this dimension. This thesis therefore supports the arguments put forward by Marks et al. (2006) that the TAN-GAL position is the key for predicting party positioning on Europe in Central and Eastern European countries. More specifically, there is evidence that the TAN side of the dimension was a key driving force behind party-based Euroscepticism, while parties closer to the GAL pole tended to support European integration, as argued by Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002). However, it is important to note that it was a specific aspect of the GAL-TAN division that crucially shaped parties’ stances on the EU in Serbia and Croatia. In these countries, the issues related to green, alternative and post-material politics were fully absent from domestic party competition. Instead, the GAL-TAN dimension captured in these countries the social conflict around the defence of national communities and primarily identity and statehood issues. As a result, the division between nationalism (nativism) versus cosmopolitanism was the key driver of party responses to Europe. For example, although traditional, conservative and authoritarian, Serbian and Croatian party-based hard Euroscepticism drew primarily on the nationalist and nativist ideology, in opposition to cosmopolitanism.

Empirical data provided limited support for the H1c hypothesis *that parties that belong to the radical right, radical left or green ideological family tend to be more Eurosceptic, whereas liberal, Christian democratic and social democratic families tend to be more Euroenthusiastic*. The study found that

radical right parties were by far the most Eurosceptic, while the liberal family was most pro-European. However, social democrats were more Euroenthusiastic than the conservatives that, along with the Christian democrat and agrarian families, expressed rather Eurosceptic positions. Therefore, adherence to an ideological family may create a certain predisposition for parties to have particular attitudes towards the EU. Specifically, liberals and social democrats were more consistently pro-European, since they found it easier to accept the supranational principles of the EU, whereas this was a rather difficult issue for other party families given their traditionalism and pronounced concerns for national issues, such as the preservation of sovereignty, national culture and traditional values. Nevertheless, belonging to a particular ideological family was not a reliable indicator of party stances on the EU: parties from the same family also expressed opposing positions on this issue, most evident in the case of the conservatives. In addition, classification into ideological families was largely conditional, and the concept of party families had limited applicability in these cases, despite a tendency of some core parties to converge with Western concepts of party families, which served as models for their ideological reinventions. This chapter therefore did not find support for the arguments that the party family was a strong causal factor (Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002) for party stances on the EU in the context of Serbian and Croatian party politics.

The specific nature of European issues and their translation into party politics in the context of these post-Yugoslav, post-communist and post-conflict societies triggered party responses that were mostly ideologically driven, despite the fact that the majority of these parties were widely perceived as 'interest groups' that were loosely ideologically underpinned, and essentially vote- and office-seeking. Specifically, while in other Central and Eastern European countries, joining the EU was associated with modernisation and transformation from a communist to a democratic multi-party system, the countries of the former Yugoslavia have been going through an additional and more complex process: post-conflict stabilisation and consolidation following the violent breakup of the joint state. Therefore, Serbia and Croatia had to tackle a specific set of predominantly identity-related issues. These were, namely, the key national and state-building issues, such as the status of Kosovo, cooperation with the ICTY, regional cooperation, reconciliation and overall attitudes towards the legacy of the post Yugoslav wars. These issues were in absolute focus of the EU's policy towards the region and the key political precondition for the EU accession of these countries. Consequently, the importance of these issues (which did not exist in other Central and Eastern European countries) largely prevented parties from



strategically approaching the EU, despite the intrinsic vote- and office-seeking nature of the majority of these parties. In other words, parties adopted views on key prerequisites for European integration from the standpoint of their ideologies – the key values and principles for which they stand, given the significance and nature of these national issues *par excellence*.

Finally, it appears that there was an important link between the patterns of domestic party competition and party stances on the EU. Support for and opposition to European integration seem to have been mostly structured by a dominant dimension of domestic political contestation, which is what scholars also found in other European countries (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Marks et al. 2006). However, previous studies have stressed that both the socio-economic left-right and GAL-TAN dimensions structure party responses to Europe both in the West and the East (Marks et al. 2006). This chapter found that in Serbia and Croatia, support for and opposition to European integration was almost entirely structured by a single dominant dimension of contestation – that is, between GAL and TAN pole (specifically nationalism vs. cosmopolitanism), as discussed above.

## Chapter 4: Parties' strategies and attitudes towards the EU

*'Only a fool does not change his opinion. I have been through the process and completed it. Nobody can make me go back there again'.* (Tomislav Nikolić, President of Serbia and former leader of the Serbian Progressive Party; see Nikolić 2012)

*I ask those who are against the EU today - because it was normal to be against Europeans at times when they were beating and killing our country - what will we do if they withdrew cross-border loans? What and whose money are we going to use to rebuild the economy? How are we going to open new factories? If someone tells me that all of this is possible without Europe, I congratulate him and give him power. [...] I personally think that is impossible. We need Europe more than it needs us'.* (Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Serbian Progressive Party; see SNS 2010a)

After examining ideological-programmatic factors, Chapter 4 utilises both cases to look at the strategic-tactical drivers of party positions on the EU. As the quote above indicates, motivated by strategic and electoral concerns, some parties and senior politicians fundamentally shifted their stances towards the EU. This chapter, therefore, seeks to demonstrate how parties in Serbia and Croatia have determined and changed their stances on the EU in accordance with strategic incentives stemming from the domestic party systems: the logic of electoral competition and post-election coalition formation. Party strategy has been recognised in the comparative literature as having the potential to significantly drive party responses to Europe. This factor specifically relates to the intrinsic nature of political parties. Besides being policy-seeking, parties may also be vote- and office-seeking organisations (see Muller and Strom 1999) and as such they may strategically form and alter their attitudes towards Europe in order to achieve electoral success, irrespective of their ideological convictions.

The chapter finds that the majority of parties were generally not prone to strategic positioning on the EU due to the specific post-Yugoslav context of these countries' integration into the EU. Party strategy, however, was a key component in the transformation and overall positioning on Europe of the three core former Eurosceptic parties: the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union. These essentially pragmatic parties did not hold any firm ideological stance on the EU. Rather, they underwent a fundamental ideological transformation and shifted their stances towards the EU, seeking to maximise their chances of securing an executive office. This adjustment was triggered by internal and external strategic incentives

in the context of dynamic electoral competition. The chapter also finds that strategic considerations significantly affected how all parties translated and used EU issues in domestic party competition.

This chapter first reviews previous studies of how strategy drives political parties' stances on Europe. It then utilises this literature to propose a number of hypotheses. The second section briefly discusses how to conceptualise and research party strategy, while the third section consists of a series of case studies aimed at depicting and explaining individual party attitudes towards the EU in relation to the strategic concerns they faced. The overall conceptual and empirical findings are summarised in the concluding section.

#### **4.1 Parties' strategies and attitudes towards the EU in the comparative literature**

Party strategy as a factor influencing party positions and policies towards Europe has been documented in the comparative literature. There are nevertheless different opinions about how to conceptualise party strategy, as well as whether and how strategy shapes party positions on the EU. In addition, scholars expressed different opinions regarding the relationship between strategy and other potential drivers of party responses to Europe, such as ideology. There are only a few scholars, most notably Sitter and Batory (Sitter 2001, 2002; Sitter and Batory 2008), who argued for strategy as a crucial driver of parties' perceptions of the EU. Instead, other authors (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002) prioritised party ideology and disregarded strategy as an explanatory factor (see Chapter 3). Nevertheless, the majority of scholars argued that the interplay between both factors may best account for political parties' stances on the EU and their use of European issues in domestic party competition (Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b).

More specifically, Kopecký and Mudde (2002, p.319) found that strategy determines whether or not a party supports the EU's current trajectory, while the ideas underlying the process of European integration are determined by party ideology. Batory (2002) similarly identified ideology as the crucial factor in determining underlying attitudes to EU integration but notes that parties are also constrained by the dynamics of coalition-building and electoral competition, i.e., the need to be acceptable as coalition partners. Batory thus concluded that Hungarian parties' stances on Europe can only be understood in the context of inter-party relations and electoral politics. In other words, a change in these

party attitudes towards the EU resulted from ‘a delicate balancing act between the need to attune their policies to those of potential or actual coalition partners, on the one hand, and to keep their voters’ loyalty, on the other’ (Batory 2002, p.535).

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) differentiated between a party’s wider ideological profile and the perceived interests of its supporters as key drivers of broad, underlying positions on the issue of European integration. The latter seems to be related to party strategy, given their argument that an interest-based office-seeking party (unlike an ideologically and values- driven one) would undertake an economic cost-benefit analysis of how European integration is likely to benefit its supporters and formulate its position accordingly. Szczerbiak and Taggart also emphasised that strategic considerations, specifically electoral strategy and coalition tactics, influence whether or not parties use the European issue as an element of interparty competition. Szczerbiak and Taggart specified that electoral strategy is determined by a number of variables. These are, namely, the type of party (i.e., if it is a catch-all party that is attempting to attract a broad electorate or a fringe party with a more segmented electoral strategy), the positions taken by party competitors, and if an electoral system allows parties to survive and secure parliamentary representation by carving out a niche electorate or it forces them to construct a broader electoral base. On the other side, coalition-tactical considerations are related to the position of its potential coalition partners (both pre- and post-election), as well as whether the party has to ‘tone down’ its rhetoric in order to secure a place in government.

Sitter and Batory (Sitter 2001, 2002; Sitter and Batory 2008) made a strong case that Euroscepticism is a product of party competition and is always ‘the politics of opposition’. The latter proposition is examined in Chapter 5, while this chapter focuses on the former. Sitter (2001, p.37; emphasis added) specifically asserted that Euroscepticism *is related* to ideology, interests and identity, voter alignments, and party strategy and organisation since ‘Euroscepticism is not a single coherent stance on the EU’ but ‘a term that covers a multitude of ideological and interest-driven stance’. What is central to his argument, however, is that ‘these factors are translated into party competition in the context of the party system, that is, the patterned interaction between parties’ (Sitter 2001, p.37). For Sitter, therefore, what is crucial for party positioning on the EU is how parties strategically positioned themselves in response to them. In his later work, Sitter (2002, p.5) further specified that ‘the parties’ responses have been shaped by a combination of their positions

on related issues and ideology, their strategies for electoral competition, and the dynamics of competition between government and opposition’.

In their work on agrarian parties, Sitter and Batory (2008) further elaborated on these assumptions. They argued that the sources of Euroscepticism are related to the four key goals parties seek to balance (see Muller and Strom 1999): party management/organizational survival, pursuing core policy preferences, securing votes, and accessing executive office. Sitter and Batory thus argued that while party-based Euroscepticism may draw on long-term goals, such as parties’ identities or core policy preferences, Euroscepticism is ultimately shaped by strategic, short-term goals: garnering votes and winning elections. In other words, the two long-term goals may produce *a tendency towards Euroscepticism*. This means that a party’s origin and identity may influence whether or not it views the EU as a threat. Sitter and Batory (2008), for example, claimed that agrarian parties’ attitudes were shaped by parties’ genesis in social cleavages and perceptions of the impact of European integration on their constituencies’ livelihoods. This was also argued by scholars that privilege ideology (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002), as well as Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b). However, Sitter and Batory (2008) further assumed that the extent to which parties’ policy preferences and orientations are translated into *actual opposition* to European integration crucially depends on the quest for votes and access to executive office. As a result, Sitter and Batory (2008, p.58) claimed that ‘for most political parties, Euroscepticism has been a deliberate strategic choice’. In other words, even if a party’s identity predisposes it towards Euroscepticism, *electoral competition and coalition games* may provide incentives for it to avoid contesting European integration and vice versa.

With respect to electoral competition, Sitter and Batory (2008) noted that focusing on a delineated section of the electorate might prompt a party to adopt its target voters’ view on the EU and therefore contest European integration if its voters are Eurosceptic. Conversely, if stressing catch-all competition, parties might face incentives to conform and not oppose the EU if there is a broader pro-EU consensus among other parties and a majority of the electorate. However, they also found that sometimes Euroscepticism may actually be the result of a catch-all strategy, mirroring its main opponent’s foreign policy. In any case, Sitter and Batory claimed that electoral incentives to contest European integration depend on the party’s target electorate (discussed in Chapter 6) and the positions of other parties on this issue, i.e. the extent to which other parties have crowded out the

Eurosceptic space. The focus of this chapter is therefore party strategic positioning on the EU in relation to its political competitors.

With regards to coalition games, Sitter and Batory (2008) claimed that the quest to participate in governing coalitions has an important effect on party stances on the EU. Specifically, if the parties' most likely and credible partners are Eurosceptic, they do not have to moderate their position because Euroscepticism does not disqualify them from office. More frequently, however, parties face pro-EU partners and must moderate their stance on the EU. In other words, the logic of coalition building/coalition politics may provide a disincentive for Euroscepticism and has a moderating effect. Moreover, Sitter and Batory argued that even after securing executive office, the logic remains the same because moving into government provides an incentive to tone down or abandon Euroscepticism (see Chapter 5).

These authors concluded that their dynamic approach to Euroscepticism provides a general framework for an analysis of parties' varying positions on the EU. In other words, examining parties' electoral strategies and coalition building policies may reveal a great deal about how Euroscepticism emerges in different party systems. In addition, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) argued that a similar set of strategic/tactical factors may impact party stances and how parties use the European issue as an element of interparty competition, as discussed above. Drawing upon these assumptions, this chapter thus tests the proposed models in the Serbian and Croatian cases and specifically formulates the following hypotheses:

H2a: The more that parties perceive the interests of their supporters are in line with European integration, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;

H2b: The more that parties attempt to broaden their electoral base and rely on the 'catch-all' electoral strategy, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;

H2c: The more that parties' political competitors 'occupy' the Eurosceptic space, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;

H2d: The more that parties seek to be 'suitable coalition partners' for pro-European parties in order to come to power, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes.

## 4.2 How to conceptualise party strategy?

The main challenge of analysing party strategies is establishing that party policies and stances on the EU are strategically driven and not the consequence of ideological convictions or other concerns. The comparative literature offers no clear answer to this dilemma, and it seems that authors who favoured strategic incentives over party ideology as a driver of their stances on the EU formulated hypotheses and conclusions based on their own judgments, expertise and knowledge of political situations in the cases they analysed (Sitter 2001, 2002; Sitter and Batory 2008). Therefore, it is rather difficult to identify objective indicators that would demonstrate the nature of the relationship between parties' strategic decisions and attitudes towards the EU. In contrast to ideology, which is often indicated by a party's programme and rhetoric (see Chapter 3), parties do not publish their electoral or coalition-building strategy in their programmatic documents, publicly discuss the methods by which they obtained political power, and rarely admit to acting strategically.

Moreover, the term 'strategy' itself generally had negative connotations within Serbian and Croatian party politics because it was often perceived of as indicating a lack of political principles. Kasapović (2003, p.56) thus noted that political negotiations and compromises aimed at forming a coalition government in 2003 in Croatia were interpreted in public as 'futile bargaining', 'political trade-offs' and 'interparty bickering', which was not auspicious for the formation of a coalition government. For their part, however, parties wanted to demonstrate the legitimacy of their views and core principles and continued faith in their key policies. Therefore, they did not want to be viewed as pursuing only the pure short-term goals of winning and maintaining political power.

This chapter builds on Chapter 3's examination of party ideological stances as they relate to the values, goals and policies of the EU. It focuses, therefore, on the cases that appear to be mostly strategically driven, i.e., where there was a low likelihood of parties adopting Euroscepticism or Euroenthusiasm as 'an implicit addition to its original propositions and voters' interests' (Rovny 2004, p.38). The chapter looks at the critical junctures and situations in which parties seemingly behave in accordance with their strategic interests (i.e., winning votes, office or implement policy depending on the type of party) despite an ideological predisposition to act differently.

Bearing in mind the methodological constraints of analysing strategic party decisions discussed above, this chapter draws on a number of interviews with Serbian and Croatian politicians as well as the author's judgments and knowledge of Serbian and Croatian party politics. Party officials were specifically asked in an interview to provide a personal explanation of events that may be interpreted as reflecting the strategic repositioning of their parties regarding the EU. However, with a few exceptions, the majority of interviewees, denied having any strategic consideration when forming and shifting their party's stance on the EU. Therefore, in order to achieve maximum objectivity and confirm the key findings, the author also interviewed a number of country experts, asking them to provide their interpretations of parties' strategic positions on the EU (see Chapter 1).

### **4.3 Party strategy and attitudes towards the EU in Serbia and Croatia**

This section examines how parties' strategical and tactical considerations influenced the formation and transformation of their positions on the EU. It specifically looks at three core parties that were weakly ideologically profiled (see Chapter 3) and appear to have developed instrumental strategically-driven attitudes towards the substance of the European integration- the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party and the Croatian Democratic Union. The section also examines parties that modified their rhetoric on the EU in response to strategic considerations, primarily electoral concerns and coalition-building strategies. The government coalitions in both countries since 2000, examined in this section, are presented in Table 4.1.



Table 4.1: Government coalitions in Serbia and Croatia since 2000

*Source:* Data collected by author

SERBIA		CROATIA	
Term	Leading parties in the coalition	Term	Leading parties in the coalition
2000-2003	Democratic Party Democratic Party of Serbia <i>(until mid-2001)</i> New Serbia	2000-2003	Social Democratic Party Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats Croatian Peasants' Party
2003-2007	Democratic Party of Serbia G17 plus New Serbia <i>Minority support of the Socialist Party of Serbia</i>	2003-2007	Croatian Democratic Union
2007-2008	Democratic Party of Serbia Democratic Party G17 plus New Serbia	2007-2011	Croatian Democratic Union Croatian Peasants' Party
2008-2012	Democratic Party Socialist Party of Serbia G17 plus/United Regions of Serbia	2011-2013	Social Democratic Party Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats
2012-2013	Serbian Progressive Party Socialist Party of Serbia New Serbia G17 plus/United Regions of Serbia <i>(until August 2013)</i>		

#### 4.3.1 The Socialist Party of Serbia

The following excerpt from the 2006 Socialists' political declaration seems to indicate the principled consistent position of this communist successor party and firm pledges to the principles set forth by its first leader and ideologist Slobodan Milošević. It specifically stated that:

Our consistency is not dogmatism. Beliefs and goals that we have adopted in the historic year of 1990 with our president Slobodan Milošević have withstood the test of time and all the temptations brought about to us by history and reality. [...] Socialists will never be ready to sail the sea of unlimited pragmatism where every compromise is possible, desirable and welcome just to win or retain power. [...] We highly value our beliefs, and we are not willing to change or discredit them for any personal or political gains (SPS 2006, p.1).

Only a few years later, however, not only did the party abandon its founding principles, but it embarked on a complete ideological transformation, rejecting the political legacy of 1990s. Its 2010 programme explicitly stated that:

Our policy has not always been pragmatic and realistic enough. [...] Two decades since the restoration of democracy, many things have changed in Serbia. The Socialist Party of Serbia has also changed. We need the change in order to confirm that under the new circumstances we are a well-organized party whose ideas and programmes are deeply rooted in our society (SPS 2010, p.5/47).

The chapter argues that strategic considerations and political pragmatism decisively contributed to the party's fundamental ideological transformation, including its attitudes towards the EU and Serbian EU membership, which was actually the most visible indication of this transformation. In other words, this Socialist Party of Serbia serves as a prime example of a party that experienced a symbiosis, rather than a division, between strategy and identity. Thus, parties do change their ideology for strategic reasons. The ideological transformation of this party as well as the shift of party stances on the EU documented in the party programmatic documents was discussed in Chapter 3. The focus of this chapter is on the evidence showing the strategy was the key driver of this change.

As discussed earlier, the Socialist Party of Serbia was the leading Eurosceptic and nationalistic party throughout the 1990s. Following its expulsion from power in 2000, the party maintained its earlier positions on key issues and did not face strategic incentives to change its stances on the EU. Instead, it denied the legitimacy of the newly established political system. It also viewed the democratic changes as a coup. After the Serbian government extradited Milošević to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), it argued that he had been kidnapped and illegally sent to the tribunal (Goati 2009, p. 289). As such, prior to 2010, this party remained on the fringe of the party system and was what Sartori (1990) termed an 'anti-system party'. The party was externally isolated, while internally politically 'ostracised' and therefore 'uncoalitionable'.

Following a series of conflicts within a group of pro-European parties, this party indirectly returned to power in 2004 by supporting the minority government of the Democratic Party of Serbia and G17 Plus in the parliament (Table 4.1). However, this did not have an effect on its key policies and stances. On the contrary, the party indirectly blocked Serbian EU accession due to its strong opposition to the conditions for Serbian EU accession, especially the requirement that Serbia fully cooperates with the ICTY. The Socialists publicly emphasized that the sole condition for its support for the minority government was the refusal to extradite those charged with war crimes (Goati 2009). Additionally, the Democratic Party of Serbia itself had strong animosity towards the ICTY. As a result, the

feasibility study on Serbian readiness to enter into a contractual relationship with the EU was blocked by the EU due to the government's failure to cooperate with the ICTY.

Following the 2007 election, the government was formed of pro-European parties, and the Socialists found themselves in a strategically new position that required the party to undergo ideological transformation. It lost support in the electorate as well as the political importance as pro-EU parties had secured the majority on the parliament, and the government no longer depended upon the Socialists. Moreover, Milošević died in 2006, which brought a new moderate party leader, Ivica Dačić, into power. Although a long-term devotee of Milošević, Dačić was a pragmatic politician who understood that, under the new circumstances, the party was significantly weakened by intra-party factional fighting over Milošević's legacy and shrinking electoral support. Dačić realised that the party would have no future unless it embarked on a process of strategic re-positioning. He publicly declared that the Socialists would not be able to win a single vote in the future if they stayed committed to the past, and that there would be no places for party members who were not ready to understand the depth of party changes (Blic 2010).

The Socialist Party of Serbia, however, found itself in a difficult political situation. Achieving its two key strategic goals (votes and political office) necessitated complex and time-sensitive political strategy and tactics. On the one hand, it remained opposed to Serbian EU membership until the mid-2000s in accordance with ideological convictions and electoral considerations as its voters were loyal followers of Milošević's Eurosceptic and nationalistic policies. As will be further discussed in Chapter 6, the Socialists' supporters were mainly rural, poor, less educated and conservative voters who were prone to nationalism and favoured an authoritarian state (Stojiljković 2007). However, aspiring to engage in coalition building and thus regain its former political glory, the Socialist Party of Serbia found it necessary to assume a more pro-European stance as all potential allies were themselves Euroenthusiastic.

The electoral base of the party shrunk over time, and, in 2007, it secured only 5.6% of the total votes in the parliamentary elections (Stojić 2011). Most of the nationally oriented and conservative voters that used to overwhelmingly vote for the Socialists during the 1990s turned to the Serbian Radical Party, soon making it the strongest party in the Serbian parliament. Thus, the Eurosceptic political space was 'occupied' by the Radicals. This development can be attributed to the conflicts and tensions that emerged within this party

in the absence of its leader; a growing distance between Milošević, who was on trial in The Hague, and the senior party officials; and Milošević's support of the Radicals' leader Vojislav Šešelj during the 2002 presidential election, despite the fact that the Socialists had their own candidate (Blic 2002). The Socialist Party of Serbia was therefore on the verge of collapse, as it targeted the same electorate as the Radicals. The latter party, however, proved to be better representatives of the traditionalist and isolationist segments of the electorate.

As a result, as Bochsler (2008) argued, political competition on the dominant axis between nationalism/isolationism and modernism/cosmopolitanism ceased to be advantageous to the Socialists, given that the Serbian Radical Party was a dominant nationalist party. Bochsler, therefore, claimed that the Socialists attempted to abandon its difficult electoral position as part of the nationalist bloc, hoping to reach new voters as a modern left-wing party. Although it is difficult to claim that it sought new voters or targeted the same electorate, the Socialist Party of Serbia strategically decided to change its policies and identity. Based on the evidence from this research, there is somewhat more support for the latter. In other words, the Socialists aimed to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable: keeping its national and anti-European voters, drawing its former supporters away from the Radicals, and moving closer to the pro-European pole of the political spectrum as a result of its long-term strategic interests.

The new party leadership, therefore, decided to focus on socio-economic issues and moderate its nationalistic rhetoric, following a strategy successfully employed by the Croatian Democratic Union in 2003. This new stance provided the party with an opportunity to be pro-EU without compromising its electoral position, given that it started arguing that only Serbian accession to the EU, which by that time was relatively advanced and difficult to reverse, would improve the nation's living standards. In other words, its strategy was to play on the core electorate's dissatisfaction with the socio-economic position, not on their pronounced concerns for national and statehood issues, thus allowing for the party gradual shift towards the pro-EU pole. This was clearly visible in the formation of a coalition with, what was until then, the insignificant Party of the United Pensioners of Serbia, prior to the 2008 election, given that this party focused exclusively on socio-economic interests of the pensioners and did not have any legacy of nationalism or Euroscepticism. Additionally, the third member of this pre-election coalition, the United

Serbia, also abandoned pragmatically its previous nationalist rhetoric and focused on socio-economic problems of the impoverished population.

The 2008 electoral campaign witnessed this coalition's new strategy (Stojić 2010). On the one side, the Socialist Party of Serbia, United Serbia and Party of United Pensioners of Serbia conducted a campaign focusing on the issues of social justice, economic development and the protection of pensioners and workers. The Socialists criticised the results of economic transition and privatization, while arguing that Kosovo must remain, at all costs, an integral part of Serbia, in an attempt not to lose its core nationalistic voters. On the other side, the coalition's attitude towards the EU was rather vague and occasionally negative due to the prevalence of support for Kosovo's independence among EU member states. However, at the time, it did not openly declare its position regarding the most pressing issues in the relationship between the EU and Serbia: the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA). In this way, the party did not 'betray' its traditional voters, and it also left the door open for potential cooperation with pro-European parties. It strategically occupied a central position within the political spectrum, making it possible for the party to potentially cooperate with both the pro-European and the Eurosceptic political blocks.

The post-2008 election coalition building process proved to be a decisive factor that reinforced the transformation of party's overall ideology and stances on the EU. After successfully balancing the apparent unwillingness of the electorate and a considerable group of senior party members to accept the new policy orientation (Konitzer 2011), president Dačić made a strategic and pragmatic decision to help form a pro-EU government (with long-term political adversaries of the Democratic Party). This decision fundamentally and irreversibly changed the Serbian political scene and was the logical finale of the party's strategically-driven ideological transformation. This reorientation was completed in late 2010 by the adoption of the new party programme written in the tradition of West European social democratic parties (see Chapter 3).

In summary, a set of strategic incentives contributed to this party reorientation. With the Eurosceptic and nationalistic political space firmly 'occupying' the radical right Serbian Radical Party, this party faced a shrinking electoral support, further creating disincentives for maintaining strong Euroscepticism. At the same time, the socio-economic left space was 'free' and not exploited by other parties. In the context of relatively advanced Serbian

EU integration and the importance of economic relations with the EU, it became clear that advocating economic development and the protection of the most vulnerable groups based on social democratic principles required the party to become Euroenthusiastic. As party vice president Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011) precisely explained in an interview, the new party position was a result of the fact that ‘it became clear that it was necessary to implement economic and social reforms, and it was realized that the EU has indeed no alternative. That was our “real-politik” assessment’.

The Socialist Party of Serbia was also ‘non-coalitionable’. Its Euroscepticism was directly tied to nationalism, and as such, it had not been accepted as a legitimate partner by the majority of pro-European parties and, more importantly, by the EU. Specifically, the party sought to become a suitable coalition partner of pro-European parties that were the dominant political force in the country, which did create strong incentives to give up Euroscepticism. Crucially, as a ‘pariah party’ in Western circles, the Socialist Party of Serbia was effectively prevented from participating in the government alongside other parties by influential Western governments until it abandoned its political legacy of 1990s. Thus, the Socialists’ outcast status served as a further catalyst for change. Moreover, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, the West pressured the Socialists to join the pro-European coalition following the 2008 post-election stalemate, hoping to counteract the Democratic Party of Serbia’s decision to start opposing Serbian EU integration (Kralev 2012).

The case of this former communist and nationalist party demonstrates the strong power that the EU exerted on the political landscape of the Western Balkan countries and how the process of EU accession created strong incentives for parties to change and adapt to ‘the new reality’. This was very well reflected in the party’s 2010 programme explained that the Socialists ‘modified its programmes and corrected policies and strategies’ in order to become ‘adjusted to the structural changes in the world and the changed historical conditions in the country’ (SPS 2010, p.47). Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011) indirectly confirmed that impending EU integration and strategic political calculations played a crucial role in changing the party’s ideology:

The Socialist Party of Serbia closely follows and assesses what is happening on the political scene in Serbia, Europe and worldwide. We see that the European formula has succeeded in Central and Eastern Europe, that these countries have managed to reform and modernise based on the European model. We cannot invent something that does not exist in the region. We are experienced people who see that it is only politically viable if you behave and formulate a strategy that is in line with

contemporary trends in the world. The EU is an undisputed model that has no alternative. We are part of the European civilization. It is no longer an issue in the party.

The party vice president Slavica Djukić Dejanović (Interview 2011) also confirmed that the change of party attitudes towards the EU was the result of party strategy and tactics. She claimed that ‘the party has made a complete turnaround over the last years and decided to be oriented towards political partners who argued that it would be better if Serbia is in the EU’. Similarly, political analyst Jovo Bakić (Interview 2011) noted in an interview that this party transformation reflected the calculations that anti-European policies had absolutely no future. Finally, EPP’s MEP Doris Pack (Interview 2011) concluded in an interview that the Socialists pragmatically decided to change themselves, since ‘they have responsibilities. They had to see the reality and acted accordingly’.

#### **4.3.2 The Serbian Progressive Party**

The Serbian Progressive Party was perhaps the most pragmatic among the core parties across both countries. After two decades of consistent nationalistic and anti-European policies (within the Serbian Radical Party), the party’s leaders adopted a radically new pro-European stance in 2008 and underwent a fundamental ideological reorientation. This rapid ideological transformation has been the most remarkable developments in Serbian politics since the reintroduction of a multi-party system in the early 1990s.

Both the party’s support for Serbian EU membership and its ideological transformation were principally strategically driven. The Serbian Progressive Party was predominantly an office-seeking party whose key goal was to maximise control over political office benefits (as conceptualised by Muller and Strom 1999). Its Euroenthusiasm was therefore instrumental, and there was no evidence that the EU had any intrinsic value for the party. This was evident in support for Serbian EU membership expressed by the party leader Aleksandar Vučić (SNS 2010a) that was couched in instrumental and utilitarian terms. He specifically stressed the economic benefits of EU membership and pointed out the importance of EU funds for ‘the rebuilding of the economy and opening the new factories’ (SNS 2010a). Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 3, although the Serbian Progressive Party abandoned its radical right-wing stance, it did not subscribe to a clearly expressed ideology. Consequently, it did not have an ideologically driven attitude to the EU.

The Serbian Progressive Party was founded in September 2008 by a break-away group of senior officials of the Serbian Radical Party, led by the Radical's deputy president Tomislav Nikolić and the secretary-general Aleksandar Vučić. The Serbian Radical Party was a radical right, nationalistic party deeply permeated by hostility towards the EU and the West. Its authoritarian party leader and ideologue of a Great Serbia, Vojislav Šešelj, had been on trial for war crimes at the ICTY since February 2003. After Šešelj voluntarily surrendered to the tribunal, Nikolić and Vučić took over the party leadership and initially maintained a close relationship with the party leader. By the mid-2000s, the Serbian Radical Party achieved significant electoral success, receiving the highest number of votes in the 2003, 2007 and 2008 elections (from 28% to 29.45% of the total votes) and becoming the largest party in the parliament. In addition, Nikolić won the 2003 presidential election, although the election was later declared invalid due to low voter turnout. In 2008, Nikolić lost presidential election to the candidate of the Democratic Party Boris Tadić, with the margin of only 2.5% of the total votes (Serbian electoral commission 2012).

The electoral success of the Radicals was largely due to the softened nationalistic rhetoric of the party leadership that, in the absence of a nationalistic party president, managed to attract a considerable share of the electorate. Nikolić was thus focused on socio-economic issues, such as poverty, unemployment, privatisation and corruption, rather than nationalism, although the party's core nationalistic values remained unchanged. Similarly, the party continued to maintain a negative attitude towards the EU, but it also began to moderating its rhetoric on this issue. For example, the party did not vocally oppose Serbian EU accession, and during the 2003 presidential election campaign Nikolić even declared that 'he and his party would provide a full contribution to Serbian accession to all European institutions and organizations, particularly the EU, but by preserving Serbian identity, national pride, honour and dignity' (Komšić 2007, p. 15).

In a 2011 interview, MP for the Serbian Radical Party Dejan Mirović (Interview 2011) confirmed that this shift was solely rhetorical and tactically driven. He explained that the change in party rhetoric was not the result of belief that EU membership was in the interests of Serbia. Instead, Mirović (Interview 2011) argued that the party had 'a rather populist and pragmatic rhetoric' until the major inter-party schism in September 2008. Specifically, Mirović (Interview 2011) argued that 'due to popularity of the EU with the Serbian electorate', the Serbian Radical Party rhetorically supported Serbian EU membership, provided that the EU recognized Kosovo as part of Serbia. He added that 'it



was pure pragmatism of a former party leadership, based on the results of public opinion research, which showed that a majority of citizens were in favour of the EU'. The case of the Radicals in the mid-2000s thus demonstrates the strong electoral incentive to moderate pronounced Eurosceptic rhetoric even when a party is deeply ideologically grounded in anti-Europeanism. This supports Szczerbiak and Taggart's (2008b) arguments that strategic incentives predominantly impact how parties translate and use this issue in the domestic party competition rather than their broad stances on the EU.

The tactical nature of the Radical's rhetoric shift was most visible at times when electoral concerns were less important, such as immediately after elections, when the true nature of this party was clearly demonstrated. For instance, in May 2007, as a newly elected president of the Serbian parliament, Nikolić strongly argued that Serbia should seek closer ties with Russia and not the West. He said that Russia would bring together 'nations that will stand up against the hegemony of America and the European Union' and that 'Serbia should associate itself with the Russian and Belarusian union' (RFERL 2007). He also argued that the majority in Serbia would strive for membership in a Russian-led alliance of states and not in the European Union, adding that Serbia 'unfortunately' was not a Russian province (RFERL 2007).

However, although successful in securing votes, the Radicals were highly unsuccessful in coalition building and obtaining power due to their lack of coalition potential (see Table 4.1). Its radical right ideology effectively isolated the party from the international community and foreign mainstream parties (with the exception of the Russian parties and similar peripheral parties from the EU), and it never became an acceptable coalition partner for other Serbian parties. Only the Democratic Party of Serbia supported Nikolić for the position of president of the parliament, tactically intended to strengthen its negotiating position as it attempted to form a coalition government with the Democratic Party in 2007. Nikolić was therefore confronted with the fact that the Serbian Radical Party would never come to power unless it became a party that was ideologically acceptable to other Serbian parties and the international community. Therefore, the necessity of coalition building significantly drove efforts to transform this party. However, this reorientation of the party soon proved impossible. Specifically, party president Šešelj had an overwhelming support among party members for his nationalistic and anti-European policy. He thus resolutely opposed any agreement with the EU. Nikolić, however,

planned to support the SAA if a declaration confirming the territorial integrity of Serbia was also adopted in the parliament.

It was therefore necessary for the moderate leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party to break away from the Serbian Radical Party, given that the Radicals repeatedly failed to get to power advocating anti-European politics after 2000. In an attempt to finally gain political power (which succeeded in 2012), Nikolić founded the Serbian Progressive Party. From the very beginning, this party adopted a radically new attitude towards the EU, supporting Serbian EU membership and rejecting the idea of a Great Serbia. The party adopted this approach because the majority of voters were in favour of Serbian EU membership; accordingly, the party did not have a chance to win the parliamentary election without assuming a pro-European path. As the EPP's MEP Doris Pack (Interview 2011) noted in an interview, 'Nikolić understood the reality and he has been behaving pragmatically'. In other words, the fundamental change constituted a strategic decision born of electoral concerns, in the context of the strong EU impact on the domestic political scene and pro-European majority of the electorate, which was the fact that Nikolić himself did not hide. He specifically argued that:

The Serbian Radical Party has never had a desire to come to power. The Serbian Progressive Party is something else. We are a pro-European party. [...] If we stand against the EU, we would never be able to win the election in Serbia. [...] We have to improve our international relations and do our homework (Nikolić 2011).

In addition, assuming a pro-European stance was necessary in order to attract potential pro-European coalition partners, which proved to be crucial in the dramatic 2012 post-election coalition building. Other traditionally pro-European Serbian parties, such as G17 plus and minor coalition partners of the Democratic Party, unexpectedly joined the Progressives (and the already transformed Socialists) and formed the coalition government in July 2012, largely motivated by the Progressives' altered attitude towards Europe. Furthermore, the EU's stance on the Serbian Progressive Party significantly changed since 2008 thus making the party became 'coalitionable' and acceptable to other Serbian parties. Unlike the unofficial policy of isolation pursued by the EU in relation to the Radicals, the Progressives maintained close contact with EU officials after adopting a pro-European reorientation. The leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia, Ivica Dačić, confirmed this relationship, noting that during the 2012 post-election coalition building, EU representatives said 'that the Progressives' position on the EU would not be a problem at

all, and that the only problem would be the participation of the Democratic Party of Serbia in the government because of its anti-European position' (Dačić 2012).

Even without direct EU involvement in Serbian party politics, strong economic relations with the EU and that fact that Serbia had already made significant progress towards EU integration made it illogical for the party to remain Eurosceptic. Nikolić (2012) demonstrated this attitude when explaining why it no longer behaved Serbia to become part of the Russian federation:

We have done too much for Serbian EU accession in the 11 years since the fall of Milošević. Ninety-seven per cent of all investments come from the EU. We have adjusted our legislation to EU's requirements. It would be very difficult for us now if the EU tells us we cannot be a member. We would have to change our whole system. Then everything would be in vain. We have done a lot of bad things in order to meet the requirements for membership. [...] We gave up so many things. We allowed them, for instance, to tell us how to allocate funds from our own budget and allowed the import of goods without tariffs.

In summary, close study of the Serbian Progressive Party revealed several characteristics of strategic electoral incentives parties are often faced with, when determining stances on key political issues. Specifically, these incentives had strong transformative power, ability to create rifts within parties, and ultimately change both a party's attitudes towards the EU and its overall ideological underpinnings.

### **4.3.3 The Croatian Democratic Union**

In comparison to Serbian parties, Croatian parties have rarely changed their underlying attitudes and policies towards the EU. The most important and significant shift occurred in late 2002 when one of the two core and dominant parties in the country, the conservative Croatian Democratic Union, started advocating Croatian membership in the EU. Although not explicitly opposed to the EU, until the early 2000s, this party did not agree with the EU's policy towards Croatia and the Western Balkans. It opposed the political conditions for Croatia's accession into the EU, especially the requirement that Croatia cooperate with the ICTY (see Chapter 3).

The party's attitude towards the EU significantly changed following an electoral defeat and the death of Franjo Tuđman, founder of the Croatian Democratic Union and former president of Croatia, in 1999. These events triggered intraparty conflict, creating a schism between the pro-European and hard-nationalist factions. By the early 2000s, the very

existence of this party was under threat. Although Ivo Sanader became the new leader in 2000, the inter-party conflicts continued until 2002, when Sanader was re-elected by defeating hard-nationalist factions. At that time, Sanader also adopted a new political platform, one that starkly contrasted with his policies prior to the 2002 re-election. He, specifically, declared that Croatia's accession into the EU henceforth served as the party's main goal. This stance effectively marginalised 'the Tudjmanist forces' and some of the most prominent politicians of the 1990s resigned from the party in protest (Jović 2006). As Jović (2006, p.86) pointed out, the party's new leaders asserted that 'isolation from Europe was no longer seen as a viable option, but as a road to decay'. Sanader confirmed the party's new orientation, arguing that 'we are now a reformed, democratic, centre-right party. We are no longer a Tudjmanist party, although we are grateful to the former head of state for what he did for Croatian independence' (Jović 2006, p.98).

This change in rhetoric was striking. As recently as April 2002, while campaigning for party president, Sanader said that the Croatian Democratic Union would never give up heroes and knights of the war (HRT 2002). He further stated that General Ante Gotovina, indicted by the ICTY in 2001 for war crimes, was a hero rather than a villain, adding that the party would honour the memory of the Croatian Homeland War. He also dismissed demands from the international communities that all sides involved in the post-Yugoslav war to apologise, stressing that 'Croatia would not accept this historical revisionism' (HRT 2002). This attitude strongly contrasted with the EU's policies in the former Yugoslavia and its emphasis on regional cooperation, good neighbourly relations and full cooperation with the ICTY.

However, the new pro-EU party's position was reflected during the 2003 election campaign. The party identified European integration as a top political priority and describing Croatia as a 'pillar in the European house' during the campaign (Dolanec 2008, p.40). Aware of voters' discontent with Croatia's economic situation and the failures of the centre-left government, the party's election campaign focused on economic and social, rather than nationalistic, issues (a strategy also employed by the Serbian Socialist Party in the 2008 election campaign). The Croatian Democratic Union thus 'guaranteed citizens a tax reduction, economic growth, rise of employment and standard, as well as membership in the EU and NATO' (SD 2003). Sanader particularly emphasised that the party would make Croatia an EU member state by 2007 and that it would cooperate with the ICTY, one of the main preconditions for EU accession (SD 2003). This strategy

ultimately proved successful, and the reformed Croatian Democratic Union prevailed in the 2003 election.

As in the case of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party, the ideological transformation of the Croatian Democratic Union was the result of a number of strategic incentives in the run-up to the 2003 parliamentary election. As Haughton and Fisher (2008) claimed, Sanader realised that a programme of national mobilization, which had worked so well for the party in the 1990s, would probably condemn the party to permanent opposition. As a result, Sanader, along with a small group of senior party officials, strategically decided to change party policy and an overall ideology, and begin advocating Croatian EU membership. This, in turn, also meant accepting of all the EU's preconditions for membership, including cooperation with the ICTY.<sup>16</sup>

As senior party official, former chair of the joint parliamentary committee EU-Croatia and state secretary of the Croatian ministry of European integration, Marija Pejčinović Burić (Interview 2011) explained in an interview, this new ideological stance was a deeply pragmatic decision by a small number of people who realised that 'the policy of isolation and nationalism had no future'. More importantly, Pejčinović Burić concluded that most senior politicians from the Croatian Democratic Union were pragmatists who knew the negative consequences of the country's unofficial isolation in the late 1990s. In other words, the party appeared to become aware that its supporters' economic interests intersected with European integration, thus triggering the transformation. Senior party officials, therefore, pushed for an ideological transformation and pro-EU orientation that was a gradual, top-bottom process, initiated by a party leadership, and critically strongly supported and reinforced by the parties' international partners from the European People's Party (see Chapter 7).

Given that the party was electorally focused on conservative, nationally oriented voters, a new policy orientation could have isolated the electorate of the Croatian Democratic Union. However, this did not occur. As political analyst Višeslav Raos (Interview 2011) argued in an interview, although voters were unable to follow or understand the party's transformation, they lacked a serious alternative to this party. The Croatian Democratic Union, therefore, felt it could safely shift its stances and acted accordingly. Parties with similar political agendas and traditions, such as the Croatian Party of Rights, were too weak

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<sup>16</sup> The same logic was followed by the leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia Ivica Dačić in 2008.

and therefore unable to take over a conservative share of the electorate that could have been dissatisfied with new party policies. Consequently, as the unquestionably nationally oriented and 'pro-Croatian' party that had fought for Croatian independence and made a crucial contribution to the formation of the Croatian state, the Croatian Democratic Union had considerable political capital that prevented minor, Eurosceptic parties from usurping its position. Although defectors formed a number of new, small parties, these did not pose any serious political threat to the Croatian Democratic Union. This party thus remained the dominant political force on the right side of political spectrum.

Furthermore, the change took place only after Sanader had confirmed and strengthened his position as party leader and concluded the process of 'de-Tudjmanisation' to the extent to which it was possible, given that his legacy deeply permeated the party (Konitzer 2011). In other words, as Pejčinović Burić (Interview 2011) pointed out, some party members still strongly disagreed with the The Hague Tribunal and thus continued to express negative attitudes towards Croatian EU accession. However, she also argued that this was a problem in the party since there was strong inter-party discipline and all members were obliged to follow the decisions of the leadership. Factions opposed to EU accession, she explained, either toned down their objections or left the Croatian Democratic Union and formed a new party.

Finally, strategic incentives arising from coalition building politics appeared to be less significant for this party's shift. The Croatian Democratic Union did not engage in coalition building because it formed a number of one-party governments between 1990 and 2000. Moreover, fragmentation of the political scene was much less pronounced than in Serbia, and along with the Social Democratic Party, it was the dominant political party in Croatia. Aware of its strength and dominance on the right of the political spectrum, this party did not have to adjust its policies and attitudes to potential coalition partners (Table 4.1). It appears that the party transformation was more related to the party's internal developments and external pressures than to its relations with other political parties or potential coalition partners, which indicates that the pattern of domestic politics does not necessarily have a crucial role in parties' repositioning on Europe.

#### **4.3.4 Party strategy and other political parties' attitudes towards the EU**

After outlining the positions of parties that experienced strategically motivated ideological transformation, this section addresses a few cases where party strategy appears to have

affected the way parties translated this issue in the domestic party competition. There is, specifically, strong evidence that tactical considerations effect how parties used EU issues in domestic politics, without actually shifting their broad, underlying positions on the EU. For example, like the Serbian Radical Party (see above), the hard Eurosceptic Croatian Party of Rights softened its rhetoric with the aim of becoming ‘suitable coalition partners’ for other conservative Croatian parties that had become pro-European, most notably the Croatian Democratic Union. As with the Serbian Radicals, the party was ‘non-coalitionable’ due to international pressures as well as its radical right-wing and Eurosceptic ideology. In addition, with the formation of an informal ‘Alliance for Europe’ in the early 2000s that gathered all other relevant, pro-European Croatian parties, the party found itself on the fringe of the party system. In other words, the pressure of coalition politics and the broad national consensus on the EU created conditions that led to the moderation of party rhetoric. More specifically, it toned down its opposition to both the EU and Croatian EU membership, although remained essentially hard Eurosceptic.

The tactical nature of this movement was most visible when, during the 2011 referendum on Croatian EU accession, the Croatian Party of Rights shifted back to its initial position and argued for the rejection of Croatian EU membership. This change in rhetoric was due to strategic challenges that were pushing the party towards Euroscepticism. Given the approaching general election and referendum, the party deliberately highlighted its uniqueness among Croatian parties as ‘the only relevant party that opposed Croatian EU membership’ and thus saw itself as guarding ‘the core national interests’ (HSP 2013b). Furthermore, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, the Croatian public became rather Eurosceptic since 2000, effectively creating a strong incentive for the party to change its rhetoric and use this issue in inter-party competition. Finally, the Croatian Party of Rights faced considerable competitive pressure from a group of similarly radical right-wing parties (see Chapter 5). These parties, especially the Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević, had been strongly Eurosceptic and already opposed Croatian EU membership. The Croatian Party of Rights and Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević, already engaged in a bitter dispute due to animosity between the parties’ respective leaders, also shared the same electorate. Seeking to attract supporters away from the Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević, the Croatian Party of Rights returned to its former Eurosceptic stance. However, the Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević, proved to be more successful in advocating opposition to the EU and secured one seat the Croatian parliament in 2011 (as

well as in the European Parliament in 2013), while the Croatian Party of Rights lost parliamentary representation.

However, the most remarkable case of tactical reposition and strategic use of the issue of EU membership was the case of New Serbia. This conservative and soft Eurosceptic party has changed its stance on Serbian EU integration twice since 2008. This was due purely to electoral incentives, most notably, the desire to obtain the 'best' coalition partner. In 2008, the party fully supported its long-term coalition partner, the Democratic Party of Serbia, in opposing Serbian EU accession. This position, adopted in the heat of the Kosovo crisis, appeared to have strong support within the electorate. Thus, the party firmly opposed the signing of the SAA, accused the government of betraying national interests, and announced its willingness to initiate the procedure for impeaching then-president Boris Tadić (NS 2008). However, after losing the election, the party assessed that this position was losing ground in the public, since 'Kosovo was not a priority among the population' as argued by party vice president Dubravka Filipovski (Interview 2011) in an interview. At the same time, the newly founded and ideologically close Serbian Progressive Party adopted a pragmatic stance on these issues, expressed support for Serbian EU membership, and was rapidly gaining support among voters. As a result, New Serbia abandoned the coalition with the Democratic Party of Serbia, which remained Eurosceptic and adopted the pro-European stance of its new coalition partner, the Serbian Progressive Party. Thus, the need to develop relationships with major parties and potential coalition partners in conjunction with the fear of political marginalisation induced parties' rhetorical shifts and repositioning on the issue of Serbian EU membership.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this analysis of Serbian and Croatian parties' responses to Europe as they relate to strategic incentives. First, as discussed in Chapter 3, the majority of parties expressed ideologically motivated stances on the EU and were not prone to strategically positioning on the EU. However, a small group of strategically driven parties did not hold any firm ideological position on the EU and thus tended to shift stances. Crucially, they underwent the full ideological transformation that was triggered by a set of strategic internal and external incentives. Finally, party strategy affected how Serbian and Croatian political parties translated and used EU issues in domestic party competition.



Serbian and Croatian parties generally did not appear to be driven by strategic calculations in their approaches towards Europe despite the fact they were mostly office- and vote-seeking parties. Accordingly, these parties (primarily Serbian ones) more closely resembled 'interest groups' rather than classical political parties. This paradox may be attributed to the nature of EU issues in post-Yugoslav and post-conflict societies. The key prerequisites for EU accession were pronounced national and identity issues (cooperation with the ICTY, regional cooperation, reconciliation and overall attitudes towards the legacy and consequences of the post Yugoslav wars), and parties responded ideologically to them in accordance with the nature and importance of these issues. The EU debate was, therefore, centred around crucial statehood issues (such as Kosovo status), in the absence of (in Serbia) or purely elite-driven (in Croatia) accession negotiations. As a result, these parties did not compromise on these national issues which (coupled with an absolute dominance of the traditionalism vs. modernism dimension of party competition) led them to respond mostly ideologically to Europe.

Consequently, the chapter did not find evidence supporting the argument that party-based Euroscepticism was primarily 'a deliberate strategic choice' (Sitter and Batory 2008) or a product of party competition (Sitter 2001) in Serbia and Croatia. In other words, it seems that Sitter (2001) was incorrect in arguing that Euroscepticism is primarily the product of party strategy, given that not all parties are prone to respond to incentive coming from the patterns of party competition. Electoral incentives and coalition-building (Sitter and Batory 2008) were not, in most cases, strong enough to shape or modify broad, underlying party stances on the EU. This was most visible in the cases of the hard Eurosceptic parties (the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights) whose core values run fully counter to the principles of European integration. These parties (along with the soft Eurosceptic Democratic Party of Serbia) thus stayed insulated from the logic and pattern of domestic party competition and remained Eurosceptic in principle.

Nevertheless, there were three core intrinsically pragmatic parties (the Socialist Party of Serbia, Serbian Progressive Party, and Croatian Democratic Union) that did not maintain a firm ideological position on these issues and thus expressed strategically motivated soft Euroenthusiastic stances on the EU. Their approach to the substance of the European integration was tactically and context driven, and coached in instrumental terms, primarily based on a cost-benefit analysis of expected electoral benefits. Their attitudes to the EU appear not to have been a component of their wider ideology, which was rather

underdeveloped and vague, especially in the case of the Serbian Progressive Party. Crucially, they have experienced a strategically driven ideological conversion. As this chapter explained, a complex blend of internal and external strategic incentives triggered the substantial transformation of these parties' ideologies and consequently their positions on the substance of European integration.

This chapter also largely supported Szczerbiak and Taggart's (2008b) arguments that strategic incentives predominantly impact party rhetoric and how parties translate and use this issue in the domestic party competition, rather than their broad stances on the EU. As examined in this chapter, this point was most visible in the case of the hard Eurosceptic parties that moderated their rhetoric in the mid-2000s without changing their overall negative stances on the EU. Furthermore, the chapter supported Szczerbiak's (2008) argument that parties may approach the issue of EU membership purely strategically. This was most visible in the case of New Serbia as it deliberately changed its position on Serbian EU membership twice between 2008 and 2010 while remaining a soft Eurosceptic party.

Furthermore, this study found some evidence to support hypothesis H2a, i.e., *the more parties perceive the interests of their supporters are in line with European integration, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. Although it was difficult to assess to what extent parties' stances were shaped by the perception that European integration was in the economic interests of their supporters (see Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b), there are indications that this was an important factor in the case of parties that shifted their stances on the EU. As will be considered in Chapter 6, this, however, does not mean that parties followed their core voters' preferences on the EU. Rather, it suggests they found that the EU was in their supporters' interests and deliberately started advocating pro-European policies without having the ideological predisposition to do so. This motivation can be recognised in the qualified support for the EU among strategically motivated soft Euroenthusiastic parties, given that it was expressed in utilitarian, economic terms. As demonstrated in this chapter, leaders of both the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party pointed out how they eventually realised that the 'European formula has succeeded', and that 'we are a small country that has yet to develop, and we cannot do it alone' (SNS 2010; Vukomanović, Interview 2011). This may be seen as a consequence of the relatively advanced EU integration of these countries. In other words, there was the tendency that the more advanced level of EU integration generate strong incentives for the transformation of Eurosceptics in potential (candidate) countries. Strong trade links with

the EU, which over time became irreversible, led leaders of Eurosceptic parties to start assessing these links as economically important, beneficial to their supports, and thus difficult to curtail. This 'path dependence' cause of transformation was most evident in the case of the Serbian Progressives and Socialists.

However, there was no evidence to support hypothesis H2b, i.e., *that the more parties attempt to broaden their electoral base and rely on the 'catch-all' electoral strategy, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. This hypothesis was proposed by Sitter and Batory (2008) and was based on their analysis of agrarian parties whose Euroscepticism was the result of electoral strategy intended to represent the interests of a delineated and Eurosceptic segment of the electorate. As discussed above, however, it was difficult to link party stances on the EU to any particular electoral strategies. It was challenging to work out which electoral strategies these parties employed and to what extent they were analogue to those in more traditional party systems, given the unsettled and conflicting nature of these parties and party systems (see also Chapter 5). Significantly, the absence of politically articulated interests of clearly segmented and differentiated electorate and very weak links within electoral constituencies precluded the formulation of recognisable and focused electoral strategies. In other words, it is debatable to what extent these parties employed any meaningful electoral strategy faced with the lack of traditional voters or the social groups with clearly expressed social and economic interests. It thus appears that they mostly employed a catch all strategy, but there was no evidence that it shaped their stances on the EU in any identifiable way.

Moreover, the chapter found some evidence to support hypothesis H2c, i.e., *the more parties' political competitors 'occupy' the Eurosceptic space, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. This hypothesis assumes that parties face strategic disincentives to adopt stances that have been propagated by other parties with similar political agendas. As discussed in this chapter, this was one of the significant factors for the transformation of the Serbian Socialists. Faced with falling electoral support as its voters turned to the Serbian Radical Party, the dominant Eurosceptic party, this party did have strong reasons to move away from the Eurosceptic political space. However, it was difficult to assess whether this triggered the overall party transformation, although it appears that it significantly contributed to it and certainly encouraged the party to soften its stance on the EU. Nevertheless, this was clearly not the factor that prompted a change within the leaders of the Croatian Democratic Union and the Serbian Progressive Party (while they were members of the Serbian Radical Party). Both parties were dominant in the Eurosceptic

political space and were not challenged by any other significant parties and thus did not feel ‘compelled’ to shift their position in this respect.

Finally, this chapter found some support for the hypothesis H2d, i.e., *the more parties seek to be ‘suitable coalition partners’ for pro-European parties in order to come to power, the less likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. Specifically, being ‘non-coalitionable’ prompted pragmatic Eurosceptic parties to change positions, while, as expected, this was rather irrelevant for ideologically driven Euroscepticism. There were indications that the logic of coalition building significantly influenced the transformation of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party, which were unacceptable coalition partners for other parties due to pressures from the West and their Eurosceptic ideology. Nevertheless, the pressures of coalition politics did not prove to be a factor strong enough to fundamentally shape or change a party’s broad position on the EU of parties whose ‘world view’ run counter or was in line with the principles of European integration. The prime example was the Democratic Party of Serbia and its strong ideologically motivated opposition to Serbian EU membership despite the lack of like-minded potential coalition partners. Similarly, the Croatian Democratic Union had limited exposure to coalition politics. Moreover, as one of two dominant core parties in the country, it did not need to adjust its positions to other parties. Rather, it ‘dictated’ policies of other minor parties.

## **Chapter 5: Party attitudes towards the EU and their position in the party system**

Whereas the previous two chapters examined ideology and strategy as factors that have been widely discussed in the comparative literature, Chapter 5 examines party positions in the party system as an explanatory variable that has been rarely addressed in the scholarly literature dealing with party stances on the EU. This chapter, specifically, seeks to determine whether party's governmental/opposition and core/peripheral positions in the party system are related to their responses to European integration. It also aims to examine whether the specific nature of these post-communist and post-conflict party systems as well as the types of political parties, created incentives or disincentives for parties to develop positive and negative sentiments towards the EU.

This chapter argues that government participation or opposition status as well as a core or peripheral position in the party system, generally were not significant driving forces behind underlying party stances towards the EU in Serbia and Croatia. This was due to the nature of European issues<sup>17</sup> in these societies that mostly triggered ideologically-driven responses, largely irrespective of the party's location in the party system. However, the chapter finds that the opposition experience significantly contributed to fundamental ideological transformation and the adoption of a Euroenthusiastic political agenda by a group of strategically motivated, formerly Eurosceptic parties. Finally, the chapter argues that a position in the party system significantly drove parties' use of European issues in domestic party competition, although this did not necessarily reflect their broad, underlying positions on the EU. Specifically, governmental and core parties tended to express more pro-EU attitudes, whereas peripheral and, to a lesser extent, opposition parties were inclined to present a Eurosceptic narrative.

This chapter looks at a wide range of parties with different characteristics and positions in the party systems. However, it also notes the difficulties in differentiating between core and peripheral parties, particularly in the milieu of the highly atomised and unsettled Serbian party system. This analysis is based on parties' public statements, parliamentary voting on

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<sup>17</sup> As discussed in Chapter 3, the key prerequisites for European integration of these countries were related to the crucial state-building and identity issues (such as the status of Kosovo, co-operation with the ICTY, regional cooperation, reconciliation and overall attitudes towards the legacy of the post Yugoslav wars) which prompted these parties to adopt mostly ideologically-driven stances on the EU.

key European issues, data on electoral performance, and parties' programmatic documents. It also draws on the interviews conducted with senior party officials from all core parliamentary and several peripheral non-parliamentary parties. The chapter begins by reviewing the literature on party position in the party system and generates the hypotheses to be tested, followed by an overview of the key characteristics of party systems and political parties in Serbia and Croatia. The central part of the chapter then examines the effects of parties' participation in their respective governments and an opposition status, as well as parties' core or peripheral position, on their attitudes towards European integration. The chapter concludes with an outline of the key findings related to the proposed hypotheses.

### **5.1 Party position in the party system and attitudes towards the EU in the comparative literature**

A party's position in the party system has rarely been considered within the comparative literature as a potential driving force of party responses to Europe. Systematic analysis of party stances on Europe in relation to their government participation or opposition status, as well as core or peripheral position within the party system, has been conducted by Taggart and Szczerbiak (Taggart 1998; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2000, 2008; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001, 2002) in a series of articles as well as Sitter (2001). Taggart (1998) initially argued that party-based Euroscepticism stemmed primarily from a party's ideology and its relative position in the party system. In his study, Taggart found that major governmental parties and parties dominant within their party systems (coming from the social democratic, Christian democratic, conservative and liberal families) were not Eurosceptic in Western Europe. Taggart, however, argued that the Euroscepticism of new politics, new populist and extreme left parties was due primarily to their peripheral status within the party system. These parties tended to take up EU issues as protest issues and thereby stressed their outsider and peripheral position in order to gain electoral support. Taggart noted a link between the emergence of these Eurosceptic parties and their opposition to the 'cartel parties', which fused themselves with the state in order to prevent new parties from emerging and surviving (Katz and Mair 1995). In other words, these 'anti-cartel parties' sought to define themselves as outside the consensus of the dominant parties, employing Euroscepticism during their process of identity construction (Taggart 1999, p.382).

Drawing on these assumptions, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2000, p.7) hypothesised that only protest parties were likely to consciously adopt a hard Eurosceptic stance as a deliberate

means of differentiating themselves from the political mainstream. Mainstream parties would tend to avoid adopting hard Eurosceptic positions in order to avoid being labelled as a protest party and, therefore, being marginalised within their own party system. However, these authors found that mainstream parties may sometimes adopt soft Eurosceptic rhetoric in order to advance their position within their domestic party system. Szczerbiak and Taggart also noted that protest parties who move into the political mainstream frequently abandon hard Euroscepticism but may retain a soft Eurosceptic tone edge to their discourse. In their later work, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) focused on the EU candidate states of Central and Eastern Europe and specifically studied how an opposition-ruling and peripheral-core position impacted party attitudes towards the EU. They noted that for parties at the 'core' of their party systems, i.e., government or potential government parties, expressing any sort of Euroscepticism would come with a high 'cost' due to their direct involvement in negotiating the accession process. Conversely, peripheral parties can more readily assert a Eurosceptic attitude because they did not participate in government and, consequently, a Eurosceptic position represents a relatively 'costless' stance. Based on the empirical evidence, they concluded that the positions of Central and Eastern European parties in their party systems were related to the expression of Euroscepticism.

However, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b, p.256) later specified that, unlike the party's ideological profile and the perceived interests of its supporters, position in the party system was not a determinant of broad underlying party positions on the issue of European integration. In their opinion, parties' positions in the system determines whether or not parties use the European issue as an element of interparty competition. Thus, a fringe protest party was more likely to oppose the consensus view on Europe than one that sought to locate itself within the political mainstream. In their latest work, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2013, p.1) explicitly argued that 'Euroscepticism was no longer a peripheral phenomenon confined to minor and radical parties'. They noted that the European issue has become central to much domestic politics in Europe as a consequence of the collapse of the permissive consensus on the EU and the post-2008 economic and political crisis in the EU. They also examined whether government participation had an effect on the positions of Eurosceptic parties on the EU and concluded that while there was a moderating impact on many parties' positions on European integration, the effect was rarely transformative.

Sitter (2001) strongly argued that Euroscepticism always included opposition to the governmental policy on European integration and that it was inextricably linked to government-opposition competition. More specifically, he found four broad patterns within party-based Euroscepticism. First, in the catch-all parties that compete along the main socio-economic left-right dimension, Euroscepticism may take the form of internal dissent. Most importantly, this type of scepticism may be exacerbated in opposition because it is more difficult to impose discipline, and opposition role may therefore push parties towards criticism of a government's pro-European policies. Second, Sitter argued that in the parties that compete on a cross-cutting territorial and cultural dimension, Euroscepticism was the result of their opposition to the social democrat-conservative 'cartel' parties that compete on the dominant left-right axis. However, he also found that coalition strategies and the pursuit of office may counterbalance this type of 'opposition driven' Euroscepticism when this kind of party is in office and consequently moderate its position on the EU. Third, a type of Euroscepticism may develop among the old hard left and 'new politics' left parties based on their opposition to cartel politics and therefore opposition to the EU as an elite project. Fourth, 'new populist' parties on the right, Sitter argued, also expressed Euroscepticism in their opposition or protest anti-cartel strategy, although political aspirations may moderate these parties' stances. In other words, Euroscepticism was a product of the dynamics of government-opposition competition and mostly a consequence of opposition to 'cartel parties', which was also argued by Taggart.

Empirical evidence from a number of case studies provided support for the importance of this explanatory factor. Conti (2003), for example, argued that spatial positioning along the political spectrum in terms of the core-peripheral was a crucial factor that determined Italian parties' attitudes towards the EU. However, he did not find evidence supporting the impact of the government-opposition status as extreme left and right wing parties did not become less Eurosceptical when they began supporting existing governmental parties. Fallend (2008) argued that Austrian 'extreme' parties, excluded from the 'cartel' of parties in the political centre, shared a Eurosceptic stance, whereas the centrist parties were more supportive of European integration. Like Sitter, Fallend also found that when a mainstream party had to leave the government and move to the opposition, internal dissent may intensify and push the party towards increased criticism of pro-European government initiatives. Batory (2008a, p.96) similarly noticed that Hungarian parties who had previously shown no evidence of Euroscepticism adopted this position upon losing governmental status, whereas election winners with a record of harder positions on European issues



made the change in reverse. Sitter and Batory (2008) later specified that while opposition parties are freer to voice their reservations about EU membership, governing parties in member states participating in negotiating EU compromises and applicant countries must continuously demonstrate a high level of commitment to the integration project as a whole. Henderson (2008) also observed that hard Euroscepticism became politically unacceptable for ruling parties in Central and Eastern European candidate states once accession negotiations commenced. Specifically, she noted that governmental parties' available political options were constrained since a decision by the EU to suspend talks was regarded as a serious political failure.

Other authors found more limited support for the claims that a party's position in the party system may determine their attitudes towards the EU. Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson (2002, p. 970), for example, argued that 'government participation was a strong and highly significant influence on party positioning on European integration' and that 'exclusion from government leads to Euroscepticism' in Western Europe. However, they argued that exclusion from government only partially explained why parties oppose European integration. These authors concluded that the left-right ideological dimension exerted the most powerful influence on EU positioning independently of government participation. Kopecký and Mudde (2002, p.320) contended that parties' responses to Europe may be attributed to their strategic considerations related to being part of the government or in opposition to it. However, they found that parties did not always harden their position while in opposition, noting, for example that the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia both softened their positions on the EU as a consequence of being in a permanent state of opposition.

Based on the key assumptions from the comparative literature that posits a relationship between parties' positions in the party system and their stances on the EU, this chapter aims to test the following two hypotheses in the context of Serbian and Croatian party politics:

H3a: The longer that parties are in opposition, the more likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;

H3b: The more that parties are positioned towards the periphery of their party system, the more likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes.

## **5.2 Characteristics of the party systems and political parties in Serbia and Croatia**

This section examines the key features of the Serbian and Croatian party systems and political parties. It classifies these highly dynamic party systems and individual political parties by drawing on classical party politics literature in order to assess to what extent Western political concepts, such as polarised vs. moderate party systems (Sartori 1990) and the concepts of mass, catch-all and cartel parties (Katz and Mair 1995), can be applied in these cases. The findings of this section serve as a basis for the consequent analysis of how the characters of the two countries' party systems and political parties impacted their responses to Europe.

### **5.2.1 Party systems in Serbia and Croatia**

Throughout the 1990s, the party systems in both countries exhibited very similar features and may be termed 'hegemonic party systems in transition' (Lewis 2000, p.136). Both post-communist systems had a dominant authoritarian ruling party operating under a facade of a democratic, multi-party system. In Serbia, Lewis argued, the dominance of President Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia was secured by tactical alliances with the radical right Serbian Radical Party in the presence of a confused and disunited pro-democratic opposition. Similarly, in Croatia, Lewis also noted a hegemonic party system clearly dominated by President Tudjman's Croatian Democratic Union and few pluralist elements.

These party systems ceased to exist in 2000 when pro-European opposition parties won parliamentary elections in both countries. However, the 'post-hegemonic phase of political change' (Lewis 2000) followed rather different paths in these countries, effectively creating varied conditions for the development of Eurosceptic and Euroenthusiastic parties. Namely, the Serbian party system transformed into, what Sartori (1990, p.328) termed, 'a polarised pluralistic system' given that it was highly fragmented in terms of the number of relevant political parties and very polarised in ideological terms. Since 2000, the Croatian system had become increasingly moderate pluralistic, with limited fragmentation, two dominant parties (one on each side of the ideological spectrum), as well as moderate centripetal competition and polarisation (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Party systems in Serbia and Croatia

*Sources:* Sartori (1990), Lewis (2000), Author's analysis

SERBIA	CROATIA
1990s	
<b>Hegemonic party system in transition</b> (Hegemonic party: Socialist Party of Serbia)	<b>Hegemonic party system in transition</b> (Hegemonic party: Croatian Democratic Union)
2000-2008	Since 2000
<b>Polarised pluralistic system</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atomised party system: high number of parties (416 registered parties in 2005)</li> <li>• Relevant anti-system parties (Serbian Radical Party and Socialist Party of Serbia until the mid-2000s)</li> <li>• Bilateral opposition: mutually exclusive opposition between parties with pro-EU (Liberal Democratic Party) and anti-EU (Serbian Radical Party) agendas</li> <li>• No alternative coalitions (access to government effectively limited to pro-EU parties)</li> <li>• Maximum spread of opinions, very deep cleavages, no consensus</li> <li>• Pronounced ideological distance among core parties (on the traditionalism-modernism dimension)</li> <li>• Politics of outbidding and overpromising</li> </ul>	<b>Moderate pluralistic system</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two dominant major parties (Croatian Democratic Union and Social Democratic Party) and a small number of relevant minor parties</li> <li>• No relevant anti-system party</li> <li>• Unilateral opposition</li> <li>• Alternative coalitions</li> <li>• Small ideological distance among relevant parties</li> <li>• Consensual nature of the political system</li> <li>• Centripetal political competition</li> </ul>
Since 2008 (split within the Serbian Radical Party)	
<b>Moderate pluralistic system</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smaller, although still comparatively high number of parliamentary parties (51 parties after 2012 election)</li> <li>• No relevant anti-system party (Serbian Radical Party lost political relevance)</li> <li>• Alternative coalitions (crucially included the Serbian Progressive Party)</li> <li>• Smaller ideological distance among relevant parties</li> <li>• Unilateral opposition</li> <li>• Moderated, more centripetal political competition and consensual political culture</li> </ul>	

The Serbian party system was extremely fragmented and atomised given that there were 416 registered parties in 2005 (Goati 2006), while 51 parties secured places in the parliament (mostly within broad coalitions) following the May 2012 election (Telegraf 2012). Moreover, two ‘anti-system parties’, the Radicals and the Socialists in the early 2000s, did not share the values of the political order in which they operated, opposing the very system of government. Also, there was bilateral opposition, which Sartori (1990) defined as the existence of two oppositions that were mutually exclusive and without a perspective of alternative coalitions. What is important for this analysis is that opposing parties’ views on the EU, especially Serbian EU membership, were one of the key issues that lay at the core of this polarised system. In other words, there was mutually exclusive opposition between parties with strong pro-EU (Liberal Democratic Party) and anti-EU (Serbian Radical Party) agendas, while there was no prospect of alternative coalitions owing to the fact that government access was effectively limited to pro-EU parties. This was due to the EU’s strong impact on domestic party politics, which acted as an important ‘external veto actor’ (as discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7), as well as the fact that Euroscepticism was not felt to be a politically legitimate stance since it was advocated by un-reformed parties with a questionable democratic outlook.

Finally, the spectrum of political opinion in Serbia was highly polarised, rather than consensual, and the distance between the two poles covered a maximum spread of opinion. Varying stances on the EU constituted an important issue that polarised the political system between the pro-European parties that came to power in 2000 and anti-European parties of ‘the old regime’. As a result, political parties struggled to agree on key political issues, and a consensus on Serbian EU membership was not achieved. In other words, EU issues were the source of the centrifugal drive of the party systems as well as the reflection of the deeply polarised society and political parties.

However, following the 2008 split within the Serbian Radical Party that resulted in both the founding of the moderate Serbian Progressive Party and the Radicals’ failure to secure parliamentary representation in 2012, the Serbian party system changed fundamentally and became more moderate pluralistic. Although it remained fragmented, it also became far less polarised because relevant anti-system parties did not exist. Moreover, alternative coalitions had been established following the 2012 elections.<sup>18</sup> Again, this overall moderation of the

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<sup>18</sup> The parties of the former regime (Socialist Party of Serbia and Serbian Progressive Party) formed a government with the pro-democratic parties that came to power in 2000 (such as G17 Plus).

party system came about once all relevant parties, including both ruling and opposition parties, began advocating for Serbian EU membership. Consequently, the system became bi-polar, political competition was more centripetal, and the wider political culture increasingly consensual and less extreme. The reorientation of the Socialists and Progressives, therefore, had a very significant moderating effect and led to a weakening of the ideological distance between the relevant parties. The only parliamentary party that remained outside the post-2008 pro-EU consensus was the soft Eurosceptic Democratic Party of Serbia, but it remained a legitimate pro-system party that did not aim to change the nature of the domestic party system.

In contrast, the Croatian party system was moderate pluralistic ever since 2000, with two major and dominant left- and right-wing parties (the Croatian Democratic Union and Social Democratic Party) that alternately controlled the government. Given the domination of these parties, the system therefore resembled a two-party system, although there were a number of relevant minor parties that proved crucial in the formation of coalition governments. Additionally, there were no anti-system parties and all parties were available for cabinet coalitions, with the exception of the Croatian Party of Rights owing to the unofficial EU policy of isolation of this Eurosceptic and radical right party. The competition was primarily centripetal and the party system was not polarised. Instead, there existed a relatively small ideological distance among parties. As a consequence, the EU was not a contentious issue and, early on, almost all relevant parties reached a consensus on Croatian EU accession by forming an informal 'Alliance for Europe'. This greatly moderated the party scene, particularly in relation to parties that were ideologically prone to nationally driven Euroscepticism, such as the Croatian Democratic Union, and also accelerated the country's EU accession.

### **5.2.2 Characteristics of the political parties in Serbia and Croatia**

This section considers the features of Serbian and Croatian parties and how their key organisational characteristics affected their responses to Europe. It begins by examining the extent to which parties in both countries may be seen as cartel or anti-cartel parties. This section then discusses how to identify the distinguishing characteristics of peripheral parties in Serbia and Croatia.

It appears that Serbian and Croatian parties were not mass parties primarily due to the lack of articulated socio-economic interests of different well-defined social groups that mass

parties traditionally aimed to represent (Katz and Mair 1995). Although there were different social groups with objective interests, it appears that they were unable to politically articulate them, especially their social and economic interests. Consequently, it was difficult for these parties to identify and represent the long-term interests of clearly segmented constituencies. Vice president of the Socialist Party of Serbia, Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011) explained in an interview, for example, that ‘there was no longer a classical monolithic working class’, since it was ‘broken’ during the transition and ‘the problem is now how to interpret authentic socio-economic problems and interests of the workers’. This statement is applicable to other social groups in what Wessels and Klingemann (1994) refer to as ‘flattened societies’ describing the social flux in the Central and Eastern European countries that made it difficult for citizens to define political interests and parties that would represent them. This was even more pronounced in post-conflict societies where the links between the ideological positions of political parties and social structures were additionally distorted by the post-Yugoslav wars.

Consequently, with the exception of regional and minority parties, the majority of these parties exhibited the characteristics of catch-all parties. To a limited extent, they also expressed some features of cartel parties, but they were primarily and predominantly leadership parties. The catch-all features of these parties may be the result of a number of factors. As argued in Chapter 3, the majority of these parties were weakly ideologically underpinned parties. This is in line with Kirchheimer (1990, p.58) argument that ‘a drastic reduction of the party’s ideological baggage’ was one of the key features of catch-all parties. However, unlike Western parties that intentionally de-emphasised social and class representation, the majority of Serbian and Croatian parties have never been deeply ideologically rooted. Moreover, most parties lacked a solid ideology or expressed an all-embracing, vague ideology in order to attract a wide swathe of voters. Thus, they did not represent disparate sectors of the electorate or social groups. As Stojiljković (2011a, p.76) argued, party identification in Serbia was superficial and unstable. Voters supported parties not on the basis of their social and economic interest but were instead drawn to parties who boasted charismatic leaders. Parties could not establish strong links with social and economic groups, while at the same time there was a great social heterogeneity among parties’ supporters. Stojiljković (2011a, p.97) thus claimed that the defining characteristic of all parties in Serbia was their lack of a particular social profile. Pavlović (2011, p.145) similarly noted the weak impact of social cleavages on electoral behaviour in Serbia, ‘given the lack of enough strong linkages between political parties and their social bases’.

Consequently, these parties 'claimed to serve the interests of all, or almost all' (Katz and Mair 1995). This was most visible in the election strategies that were mostly catch-all.

However, Katz and Mair's (1995) concept of cartel parties may not apply to Serbian and Croatian political parties. Although the systematic analysis of cartelisation of these two party systems is outside the scope of this thesis, it seems that these parties have not become Western-style cartel parties. The emergence of cartel parties would require stable patterns of party interaction and stable state institutions, both of which were missing in Serbia and Croatia, particularly in the former one. There was an atomised party system in Serbia as a number of parties emerged and disappeared over the years. Two key and dominant parties existed in Croatia, but cannot be classified as cartel parties that aimed to contain political contestation. Accordingly, major parties in Serbia and Croatia do not appear to have attempted to cartelise their respective party systems and, as Katz and Mair (1995) argued, contain and manage political competition in order to exclude other parties from securing their share of state resources.

The institutional settings of party and electoral systems may have also contributed to the lack of party cartelisation. Specifically, major parties may have intended to manage political contestation and marginalise minor parties. These minor parties, such as G17 Plus and the Croatian Peasants' Party, had significant potential to 'blackmail' major parties during post-election negotiations on government formation, which was not proportional to their electoral results. However, minor parties were also valuable pre-election coalition partners that provided additional, synergic effect to major parties and contributed to their electoral performance. Some unofficial attempts to cartelise party systems were opposed by minor parties. Such resistance was most evident in 2012 when the Socialist Party of Serbia strongly denied that the country was moving towards a two-party system dominated by the Democratic Party and the Serbian Progressive Party and resisted any changes in the electoral system that would create conditions for it. For example, party vice president Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011) asserted that she 'was terrified of a two-party system and strongly opposed to it'.

However, a strong link between the state and parties can be definitively identified. These parties were heavily dependent on the state, obtaining their resources from state subventions. Moreover, public utilities constituted 'spoils' for victorious coalitions. As Krašovec and Haughton argued (2011, p.208), in terms of their resources, parties from

post-communist countries have actually never been anything other than cartel parties. This chapter, however, argues that although the state played an important role in the development of Serbian and Croatian parties, conditions did not allow for the existence of fully-fledged cartel parties, which Lewis (2000, p.161) noted as a general rule in Central and Eastern European party systems. As a result, it is difficult to characterize some of these parties' Eurosceptic positions as being motivated by their anti-cartel or anti-establishment stances.

Finally, to what extent can Serbian and Croatian parties be seen as core and peripheral parties? Scholars have utilised various indicators to characterise a party's status. Taggart (1998) defined 'protest parties' as those whose appeal stems from the fact that they both reject and stand outside a group of established parties. He argued that such 'discontent parties' or 'anti-establishment parties' emphasise their distance from the parties of government, while defining 'mainstream parties' as those which have been in government or have attempted to promote themselves as worthy of support because of their proximity to the government. Taggart, it seems, argued that ideology did not indicate a party's peripheral or core status and that proximity to a governmental status was the key to its status. Later, Szczerbiak and Taggart (2000) further explained that the distinction between 'protest' and 'mainstream' parties relates to a party's relationship to the established party system and is derived from Katz and Mair's (1995) cartel party model. In their subsequent work, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001, p. 23) used the term 'peripheral party' to describe parties at the extremes of the party system and which maintain 'ideological positions outside the consensus at the heart of the party system'. Thus, a party's ideology may indicate its core or peripheral status in a party system, given that these authors argued that peripheral parties were often right-wing parties or at least parties of a nationalist orientation. Taggart and Szczerbiak were, however, aware of the problem of identifying mainstream and protest parties in the Central and East European context, since they noted the clear lack of stable pattern of interactions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'.

Drawing on the comparative literature, this chapter conceptualises core parties as either governmental or opposition parties that have realistic chances of coming to power, maintain a considerable number of MP's in the parliament, and also belong or aim to belong to one of the mainstream party families. It does not draw on the cartel/anti-cartel distinction since, as Lewis (2000, p.160) argued, Western European concepts of cartel parties are not useful analytical tools in the case of Central and Eastern European party



systems. However, within the context of Serbian party politics, identifying peripheral parties poses a significant challenge, especially in regards to the Serbian Radical Party. Although this party often held the majority of seats in Parliament, it maintained a strong nationalistic and radical right ideology and was ‘non-coalitionable’. This chapter thus follows Sartori’s (1990) criteria for identifying relevant parties, defining them as parties that are able to affect the tactics of party competition and alter the direction of competition from centripetal to centrifugal competition. Given the significant electoral strength of the Serbian Radical Party, it is defined as anti-system in the early 2000s, core in the mid-2000s and peripheral after 2012.

### **5.3 Party position in the party system and attitudes towards the EU in Serbia and Croatia**

#### **5.3.1 The impact of government participation and opposition status**

The first factor to be examined is the impact of government participation and opposition status on party attitudes towards the EU. Serbian and Croatian parties’ positions on the EU since 2000 are presented in Table 5.2. Empirical data in Table 5.2 shows that party-based Euroscepticism was mostly, although not exclusively, an opposition phenomenon, given that the majority of Eurosceptic parties were opposition parties across both countries since 2000. Specifically, whereas all of the parties characterised in Chapter 2 as hard Eurosceptic were in opposition, soft Eurosceptic parties were both part of the governments and in opposition to it throughout the analysed period. In other words, maintaining hard Eurosceptic position appeared to preclude parties from government participation, such as in the case of the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights. However, soft Euroscepticism did not prevent parties, including the Democratic Party of Serbia, New Serbia, and the Croatian Peasants’ Party, from joining the ruling coalitions. This finding largely recalls previous studies of political parties in Central and Eastern European countries. Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001), for example, pointed out that although most governing parties in these states were not Eurosceptic, some ruling parties expressed soft Euroscepticism in the early 2000s. This tendency for a ruling party to be more pro-European than opposition ones in Serbia and Croatia brings into consideration the origins of its orientation and the nature of the relationship between these two phenomena. That is, does a party’s status as in government or opposition impact its attitudes towards the EU?

Table 5.2: Party governmental/opposition positions and attitudes towards the EU  
*Source:* Data collected by author

SERBIA					
	2000-2003	2003-2007	2007-2008	2008-2012	2012-2013
Governmental parties					
	DS NS DSS <i>(until Aug,2001)</i>	DSS NS G17 plus	DS DSS NS G17 plus	DS SPS G17 plus	SNS SPS NS G17 Plus <i>(until Sept. 2013)</i>
Opposition parties					
	SRS SPS	DS SRS SPS <i>(supported minority government)</i>	SRS SPS LDP	SRS DSS NS SNS LDP	DS DSS  SRS Dveri <i>(non-parliamentary parties)</i>
CROATIA					
	2000-2003	2003-2007	2007-2011	2011-2013	
Governmental parties					
	SDP HNS HSS	HDZ	HDZ HSS	SDP HNS	
Opposition parties					
	HDZ HSP	SDP HSS HSP	SDP HNS HDSSB HSP	HDZ HSS HDSSB HSP- Dr Ante Starčević  HSP <i>(non-parliamentary party)</i>	

*Note:* Soft Eurosceptic parties are listed in bold, Hard Eurosceptic parties are listed in bold and underlined

*Acronyms:* DS- Democratic Party, DSS- Democratic Party of Serbia, NS- New Serbia, SRS- Serbian Radical Party, SPS- Socialist Party of Serbia, LDP- Liberal Democratic Party, SNS- Serbian Progressive Party, HDZ- Croatian Democratic Union, SDP- Social Democratic Party, HNS- Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats, HSS- Croatian Peasants' Party, HSP- Croatian Party of Rights, HDSSB- Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonija and Baranja.

### 5.3.1.1 Governmental status and attitudes towards the EU

The comparative literature argued that government participation creates conditions and incentives for parties to become more Euroenthusiastic, since European integration is primarily a government-driven process (Sitter 2001). Involvement in government may, therefore, have a moderating effect on Eurosceptic parties (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2013).

This may occur more frequently in candidate countries where ‘governments negotiating EU accession terms continuously have to demonstrate a high level of commitment to the integration project as a whole’ (Sitter and Batory 2008, p.68). This chapter finds that in both Serbia and Croatia, government participation did not determine the formation of underlying party attitudes towards the EU. However, government participation appears to have had a moderating effect on rhetoric and concrete policies of some parties, primarily former Eurosceptic ones that, after coming to power, strongly pursued pro-EU agendas in an effort to prove their new orientations.

Specifically, a number of parties were consistently hard Euroenthusiastic, such as the Democratic Party and G17 Plus in Serbia, and the Social Democratic Party and the Croatian People’s Party-Liberal Democrats in Croatia, as discussed in Chapter 3. These parties, both in the government and in opposition, advocated for EU membership without expressing any scepticism towards the substance of EU integration. On the other side, government participation tempered the rhetoric of the soft Eurosceptic Croatian Peasants’ Party, while it had no moderating impact on the Democratic Party of Serbia (given its strongly ideologically driven position on the EU). Finally, parties that abandoned Euroscepticism, namely the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia, and the Croatian Democratic Union, did so while in opposition and driven by strategic considerations aimed at coming to power (see Chapter 4). Their government involvement was, therefore, the consequence of transition that had occurred before they came to power rather than the cause of fundamental ideological transformation. In other words, these parties secured government participation only after having abandoned their previous Eurosceptic stances. As will be discussed later in this chapter, this shift was considered a necessary political decision for parties aiming to ascertain power in (potential) candidate countries.

Government participation, however, further discouraged Euroscepticism and reinforced the pro-European rhetoric of the majority of the parties examined. The Croatian Peasants’ Party, for instance, shared the pronounced concerns of its core agricultural electorates over their socio-economic position after Croatian joining the EU. Governmental participation from 2007 to 2011 did not change the party’s overall scepticism, although it had a moderating effect, primarily on its rhetoric. Thus, while in government, the party did not pursue a Eurosceptic agenda or object to policies aimed at Croatian EU accession. On the contrary, it presented itself as a defender of its core voters’ interests and pointed out the

beneficial terms of accession that it had negotiated. In an interview, party vice president Marijana Petir (Interview 2011) precisely explained that the party had not accepted everything that was required by the EU and thereby managed to negotiate a period of twelve years within which foreigners would not be allowed to buy agricultural land. She further explained that the party had secured significant financial funds for rural development and agriculture.

This change in rhetoric and policies as a result of participation in government was, however, most striking in the case of former hard Eurosceptic parties. As their transformations occurred while they were all in opposition, these parties had limited space to prove and implement newly defined policies. Government participation, however, gave these parties an opportunity to demonstrate and further reaffirm their reorientation, given the strong incentives to prove themselves as reformed and legitimate pro-European parties. This was most remarkable in the case of the Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia. After forming a coalition government in 2012, the two parties pursued a firm pro-EU agenda that created conditions for the commencement of Serbian EU membership negotiations. Hoping to advance Serbia's accession into the EU, this coalition brokered a deal that *de facto* recognised Kosovo's independence. Party leaders' rhetoric also became markedly more Euroenthusiastic in 2012 and 2013. Socialist leader Iвица Dačić thus argued that 'the largest and most important political project of the government is to introduce Europe into every pore of Serbian society, into each bone and thought' (Danas 2013a). The Progressive's president Aleksander Vučić similarly specified that Serbs have to fit into Europe and to accept its rules, rights and obligations, and stressed 'a commitment to do everything possible to try to make up for the time we have lost' (Danas 2013b). Socialists' vice president Slavica Djukić Dejanović (Interview 2011) also commented in an interview that the fact that the Socialists were in power 'was the strongest assurance that Serbian EU integration will continue'. In her words, 'the party gave a major contribution to the integration process since EU standards have been fully accepted in areas where the Socialists ministers were in charge'.

Similarly, the Croatian Democratic Union strove to present itself as pro-EU after regaining power in 2003. This resulted in a moderation of the party's rhetoric and the adoption of policies aimed at speeding up Croatia's EU membership bid. As Jović (1999) noted, the choice of coalition partners was the first sign of the party's 'more responsible policies'. Jović (1996, p.98) stressed that instead of relying on the radical right Croatian Party of

Rights, this party chose to form a coalition with the Croatian Social Liberal Party and, more significantly, the representatives of ethnic minorities, including the Independent Democratic Serb Party. The establishment of this coalition thus constituted a radical departure from the previous policy of the Croatian Democratic Union. However, what crucially strengthened and reaffirmed this party's pro-EU position was the fact that it began negotiating conditions for Croatian EU membership in 2005. This further discouraged the Euroscepticism that this party was ideologically prone to (see Chapter 3), given the necessity of pursuing a pro-EU agenda in the context of the country's EU membership. Furthermore, the Croatian Democratic Union effectively monopolised the accession negotiations and portrayed the 2011 completion of negotiation as its most important and historic success. Adopting a Eurosceptic stance or even a critical attitude towards EU accession terms was not, therefore, a viable option for this party, since doing so would cost the party its credibility and a key political asset in the run-up to the 2007 and 2011 elections. Thus, Croatia's status as an accession country and the fact that EU accession was a strategic goal of political elites made it difficult for governing parties to express Euroscepticism in Croatia.

As in many other respects, the soft Eurosceptic Democratic Party of Serbia served as an exception to this trend as its government participation did not 'soften' or discourage the party's Eurosceptic rhetoric and policies. As the ruling party from 2003 to 2008, it did not object to Serbian association with the EU. However, the party opposed the extradition of indicted war criminals to the ICTY, which led to a suspension of negotiations. Despite serious consequences and the suspension of negotiations with the EU, the party did not abandon its principled opposition towards cooperation with the ICTY but managed to 'encourage' the voluntary surrender of indictees by declaring such action a 'patriotic obligation' (Goati 2006). EU negotiations resumed shortly after the party made this pronouncement. Nevertheless, the Democratic Party of Serbia adopted a staunch Eurosceptic stance after Kosovo declared its independence from Serbia in 2008, despite the fact that the party was most directly engaged in the process of Serbian EU integration and that it contributed significantly to the signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. The case of this party, therefore, shows the strength of party ideology and indicates that when a value-driven party encountered a major obstacle, most notably the issue of Kosovo, its government participation proved to be rather irrelevant. In other words, participation in government did not lead to the moderation of the party's stances and policies on the EU. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Democratic Party of Serbia

sacrificed its governing position for its fundamental principles, i.e., the preservation of the country's international borders, endangered by the EU's *de facto* support for Kosovo's independence.

### **5.3.1.2 Opposition status and attitudes towards the EU**

Although Table 5.2 shows that Eurosceptic parties, primarily those with hard Eurosceptic stances, were mostly in opposition, this chapter did not find evidence that Serbian and Croatian party-based Euroscepticism was a product of the politics of opposition. Instead, opposition status represented one of the factors that triggered a fundamental reorientation of strategically-driven former Eurosceptic parties towards the pro-EU pole. Also, the Euroscepticism of opposition parties was not a result of government exclusion in these countries; rather these parties were excluded from government because of their pronounced Euroscepticism.

Analysis of Serbian and Croatian party systems did not find evidence supporting Sitter's (2001) arguments that Euroscepticism was a product of party competition and 'the politics of opposition'. The lack of relationship between parties' opposition status and their stances on the EU was primarily due to the fact that the nature of these party systems and the patterns of party competition did not create conditions for 'opposition based' Euroscepticism. This was particularly the case in Serbia due to its highly polarised and atomised party system. As discussed in Chapter 3, classical political cleavages, particularly on the socio-economic left-right dimension, were blurred in these societies, while political parties were consequently weakly ideologically rooted. Moreover, it was difficult to precisely categorise the nature of these parties and their electoral strategies. While it appears that these parties exhibited some characteristics of catch-all parties, it was more difficult to argue that they transformed themselves into Western-style cartel parties. These features of parties and party systems, in turn, generated political conditions substantially different from those argued by Sitter and had consequences for 'opposition based' Euroscepticism, as detailed in the rest of this section.

Sitter (2001) argued that catch-all or cartel parties may become Eurosceptic when in opposition due to the natural tendency of opposition parties to oppose government policies and the fact that EU integration was government-driven process. However, this does not appear to have been the case in Serbia. As discussed earlier, there was a high level of electoral volatility and the party system was polarised pluralistic (Sartori 1999), which

resulted in the lack of stable patterns of competition between government and opposition parties. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, Serbian opposition parties that expressed Eurosceptic stances, namely the Serbian Radical Party, were primarily ideologically and identity motivated. Moreover, the dynamics of party competition impacted parties' rhetoric but not their broad underlying stances on the EU.

Additionally, following the transformation of the Serbian party system from polarised to more moderate pluralistic in 2008 (a shift that required the majority of parliamentary parties to reach a consensus on Serbian EU accession), opposition parties frequently criticised governmental parties for not being pro-European enough rather than adopting a Eurosceptic position. Paradoxically, this was most evident in the case of the leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party, which was in opposition until 2012. This party strongly criticised the ruling and traditionally Euroenthusiastic Democratic Party for 'not understanding the essence of EU integration' and for being unsuccessful in securing candidate status, since 'it did not understand that Serbia cannot move forward without the EU' (SNS 2010b). The Serbian Progressive Party stressed that it would bring Serbia into the EU quicker than 'the current incompetent government, which was the key obstacle in the process of Serbian EU accession'. Its officials further castigated the Democratic Party, noting that 'the corrupt Serbian government' attributed all of its erroneous decisions and policies to EU demands' (SNS 2009).

In Croatia, where consensus on the country's EU integration was reached in the early 2000s and the political system was moderately pluralistic and less polarised, the opposition Social Democratic Party also criticised the ruling conservative Croatian Democratic Union for not being able to understand and lead accession negotiations with the EU. This party specifically accused the Croatian Democratic Union of adopting the social democrats' pro-European politics out of necessity and political opportunism, not in accordance with its own beliefs (SDP 2007). The Social Democratic Party further accused the government of hindering reforms, argued that its capacity to lead the negotiations was modest, and described adoption of EU legislation as 'inefficient' (SDP 2007). These two cases again indicate that once the wider consensus on EU integration has been reached in candidate countries, major political parties, including opposition ones (unless they are identity-driven Eurosceptics), found it increasingly difficult to maintain Eurosceptic policies.

Sitter (2001) also argued that parties that compete on a cross-cutting territorial and cultural dimension may adopt Euroscepticism as a result of their opposition to the social democrat-conservative cartel parties. However, in both countries, the parties that compete on this dimension, i.e., ethnic, minority, regional or liberal parties, were traditionally and primarily identity-driven Euroenthusiastic parties. This may be attributed to the lack of established cartel parties in both countries. Additionally, EU integration did not run counter to these parties' fundamental values and the concerns of their core voters. Nevertheless, the conservative, regionalist, and soft Eurosceptic Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonija and Baranja appeared to be a notable exception. Given its focus on opposing the national centre and the nation's two dominant parties, the Social Democratic Party and the Croatian Democratic Union, as explained by the party's MP Boro Grubišić (Interview 2011), its Euroscepticism may be seen as a reflection of 'politics of territorial opposition'. However, the party's identity and genesis also suggests the presence of ideologically-driven scepticism. Finally, there were no relevant 'new politics' left and 'new populist' right parties (Sitter 2001), as discussed in Chapter 3, that may have developed Euroscepticism driven by opposition and protest strategies in relation to mainstream parties in these countries. Parties that may be seen as belonging to this category, such as the Serbian Dveri or a number of Croatian single-issue Eurosceptic parties that emerged but also disappeared over the years were nationalist parties that primarily promoted an ideologically motivated opposition to Europe. Their Eurosceptic stances were reinforced, although not largely shaped by, their protest nature, as discussed later in this chapter.

Furthermore, contrary to Sitter's arguments, opposition status served as one of the most important factors that triggered formerly Eurosceptic parties to adopt a pro-EU stance. This thesis thus supports Haughton and Fisher's (2008, p.437) conclusions regarding the Croatian Democratic Union that electoral defeat (and the desire for international respectability) led this party to rebrand itself as a mainstream European centre-right party. Specifically, a combination of two factors arising from the domestic party systems, namely parties' 'office- and vote-seeking' character and opposition status, created conditions for the transformation of the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party and the Croatian Democratic Union. These parties initiated their transformations while all in opposition. The Socialist Party of Serbia experienced 'political ostracism' after having lost elections for the first time, which contributed to its transformation. The same can be observed in the case of the Croatian Democratic Union which, after having lost elections for the first time, initiated pro-EU transformation. Similarly, within the Serbian Radical



Party, leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party feared a long-term opposition status after many unsuccessful attempts to form a government. This was a particularly important factor in the case of the Serbian Socialists, who were isolated and strongly stigmatised by both the international community and other Serbian mainstream parties after being ousted from power in 2000. Party vice president Slavica Djukić Dejanović confirmed that this ostracism drove the Serbian Socialists Party to alter its position on the EU. Djukić Dejanović (Interview 2011) stressed in an interview that ‘the experience of opposition status and the fact that the Socialists were stigmatized, after 2000, as the Jews in Nazi Germany, significantly helped the party to adopt European standards as its own’.

In both Serbia and Croatia, therefore, the opposition experience motivated political parties to shift attitudes towards the EU. Most notably, the trauma of electoral defeat had significant consequences for these parties, particularly Serbian ones, which ‘were essentially more interest groups than classical parties’ since ‘intra-party structure and organization were set up as interest group’ (Gligorov 2007, p.224). As a result, electoral loss led to internal tensions within all three parties since losing political power also meant losing privileged access to state resources and the accompanying privileges. Opposition status thus triggered intra-party friction between ‘extroverts’ and ‘introverts’ (Konitzer 2011), with the former seeking to improve their electoral prospects and adopt more pro-EU positions and the latter seeking to maintain a Eurosceptic course. This ultimately led to either the marginalisation of Eurosceptic factions, as experienced by the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union, or a split within the party and the formation of a new Euroenthusiastic party, as in the case of the Serbian Progressive Party.

The context of candidate and accession countries was also important for the transformation of former Eurosceptic opposition parties. As EU accession advanced, these parties found it increasingly difficult to remain anti-EU, unless they were deeply ideologically driven. Parties not involved in the process of accession while in opposition feared marginalisation because the political debate centred around EU accession and ruling parties were in position to capitalise on their direct involvement in this process. Moreover, while in opposition, these parties came to realise that due to the relatively advanced integration process and the fact that the EU effectively blocked hard Eurosceptic parties from government participation, they would never come to power without becoming pro-European. Hard Euroscepticism thus prevented these parties from securing political power which, in turn, contributed to their transformation.

Finally, this chapter argues that for opposition parties, repeated exclusion from government was a consequence, rather than a cause of, scepticism and hostility towards the EU. This is in line with Henderson's (2008, p.113) study of hard Eurosceptic parties in Slovakia and Romania. In these countries, she noted, parties' attitudes towards the EU appear to have resulted in their exclusion from government. Conversely, Henderson did not find that the development of such stances has been a consequence of government exclusion. In the case of hard Eurosceptic parties in Serbia and Croatia, their exclusion from government appears to be a consequence of both the parties' respective political legacies and international pressure. Throughout the 1990s, the ruling Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Radical Party, and the Croatian Democratic Union maintained not only authoritarian and nationalist but also Eurosceptic positions. After the 2000 democratic changes, Euroscepticism was therefore perceived by the wider public and other parties as a position without political legitimacy and closely tied up with the nationalism manifested by these parties. This close association of Euroscepticism with extreme nationalism was widespread well into the 2000s, until the Democratic Party of Serbia adopted a policy of opposition to Serbian EU membership. This party's policy was not based on nationalistic and anti-democratic political platform, but emerged as a result of concerns for the territorial preservation of Serbia in light of Kosovo's proclamation of independence.

Moreover, Western countries worried about the possibility of Eurosceptic, unreformed, nationalist parties acquiring political power in Serbia and Croatia. Given the overall EU influence in the region, hard Eurosceptic parties were practically excluded from negotiations on the formation of government, most visibly in the cases of the Serbian Radical Party and Croatian Party of Rights. The Serbian Radical Party was an unacceptable coalition partner for other Serbian parties since it had been unofficially isolated by the Western countries and the EU, as will be discussed in Chapter 7. Goati (2006, p.296) explained that the Democratic Party of Serbia was specifically warned in 2007 by the EU that 'a coalition with the Radicals would mean "turning their back" on the EU and a step towards new isolation for Serbia'. Furthermore, Goati noted that after the Radicals' deputy president Tomislav Nikolić temporarily became the parliament's president, economic-financial dealings with EU countries and negotiations on investments, loans and credits were immediately blocked. Thus, faced with the negative effects of its decision, the Democratic Party of Serbia made an abrupt political turnaround and voted to depose Nikolić.

Kasapović (2003, p.55) termed this action ‘the Austrian syndrome’, noting a similar relationship between the mainstream Austrian People’s Party and the Eurosceptic Freedom Party. Kasapović (2003, p.55) explained that the Croatian Party of Rights was banned from negotiating on a coalition government in 2003 because ‘of an outcry by the international community regarding the ideological and political profile of this party’. Kasapović (2003, p.55) specifically pointed out that the Croatian Democratic Union forswore the coalition with the Croatian Party of Rights because it feared that the EU might use this alliance as a pretense to turn down the Croatian candidacy for EU membership since ‘the EU strongly objected to the possibility of the creation of such a coalition government’. As a result, the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights failed to secure government positions. Henderson (2008, p.113) found the same in the case of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia and the Party of Social Democracy of Romania. Both parties distanced themselves from their more extremist mid-1990s coalition partners on the right and left, due to their hard Euroscepticism, recognising that both the EU and NATO found this stance unacceptable.

### **5.3.2 The impact of core and peripheral positions**

The following section examines how core and peripheral positions (Table 5.3), as defined in Section 5.2, impacted party attitudes towards the substance of the European integration. The comparative literature argued that Euroscepticism may be related to ‘peripherality’ in party systems (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2002). Accordingly, being on the periphery of a party system inclines a party towards Euroscepticism as a means of differentiating itself from the political mainstream or core, which tends to be more Euroenthusiastic.

Table 5.3 appears to confirm the assertions of scholars who argued that Euroscepticism, especially the hard variety is, to a large extent, related to parties’ peripheral status. Specifically, all hard Eurosceptic parties were peripheral parties, while none of the peripheral parties examined expressed Euroenthusiastic sentiments. In addition, all core parties were either Euroenthusiastic or soft Eurosceptic parties, with the notable exception of the Serbian Radical Party. However, given the nature of the two party systems and the fact that the majority of parties expressed ideologically driven stances on the EU, the following section argues that a core-peripheral position was not a crucial factor in determining party responses to Europe.

Table 5.3: Party core/peripheral positions and attitudes towards the EU

Source: Data collected by author

SERBIA	CROATIA
<b>Core parties</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Democratic Party</li> <li>• Serbian Progressive Party</li> <li>• G17 plus</li> <li>• Liberal Democratic Party</li> <li>• Socialist Party of Serbia</li> <li>• <b>New Serbia</b></li> <li>• <b>Democratic Party of Serbia</b></li> <li>• <b><u>Serbian Radical Party</u></b> (2003-2012)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Democratic Party</li> <li>• Croatian Democratic Union</li> <li>• Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats</li> <li>• <b>Croatian Peasants' Party</b></li> <li>• <b>Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonija and Baranja</b></li> </ul>
<b>Peripheral parties</b>	
<p>Parliamentary parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Serbian Radical Party</u></b> (2000-2003 <i>anti-system and peripheral/ since 2012 non-parliamentary and peripheral</i>)</li> <li>• <b><u>Socialist Party of Serbia</u></b> (2000-2003 <i>anti-system and peripheral</i>)</li> </ul> <p>Non-parliamentary party:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Dveri</u></b></li> </ul>	<p>Parliamentary parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Croatian Party of Rights</u></b></li> <li>• <b><u>Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević</u></b> (since 2011)</li> </ul> <p>Non-parliamentary parties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Croatian Pure Party of Rights</u></b></li> <li>• <b><u>Autochthon Croatian Party of Rights</u></b></li> <li>• <b><u>Only Croatia</u></b></li> <li>• <b><u>The Independence and Progress Party/Croatian Bell</u></b> (in mid 2000s)</li> <li>• <b><u>Croatian Growth- HRAST</u></b> (since 2011)</li> <li>• <b><u>Alliance for Change</u></b> (since 2011)</li> </ul>

Note: Soft Eurosceptic parties are listed in bold and hard Eurosceptic parties are listed in bold and underlined.

### 5.3.2.1 Core parties and attitudes towards the EU

This chapter did not find strong evidence that a core position within the party system shaped party stances on the EU, despite empirical data showing that core parties were overwhelmingly Euroenthusiastic. Their Euroenthusiasm was either ideologically driven or was the consequence of the strategically motivated transformation. However, party rhetoric on Europe may have been impacted by a party's core status in the party system but only when there is a consensus on Europe at the political core.

Although rarely focused on core parties, the comparative literature argued that mainstream parties tend to avoid adopting hard Euroscepticism in order to avoid being labelled as a

protest party and thus becoming marginalised within their own party system (Szczzerbiak and Taggart 2000). Szczzerbiak and Taggart (2008b) later argued that a party that sought to locate itself within the political mainstream is less likely to oppose the consensus view on Europe and use the European issue as an element of interparty competition. What appears to be important for core parties' responses to Europe is the consensus on Europe among these parties. This chapter, therefore, found significant differences in this respect between Serbia and Croatia, thus creating rather different contexts of domestic debate and the positioning of core parties on the EU.

In Serbia, it was difficult to identify clearly separate groups of core and peripheral parties (apart from the distinction between parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties) owing to its atomised party system, as discussed earlier. Crucially, a consensus about EU integration has never been reached among relevant political parties, including those that may be termed core. As a result, this created a considerable freedom for core political parties to express both soft and hard Euroscepticism while, at the same time, it did not open space for peripheral parties to emerge and exploit this issue.<sup>19</sup> In other words, core parties did not have to avoid adopting Eurosceptic stances out of fear of political marginalisation nor did they find it necessary to moderate their rhetoric on Europe. Therefore, after abandoning its opposition to the very nature of the political system in the early 2000s, the hard Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party effectively became the core mainstream and largest party in the parliament without having changed or moderated its ideological hostility to Europe. Furthermore, as an undoubtedly core party, in 2008, the soft Eurosceptic Democratic Party of Serbia adopted a policy of sharp opposition to Serbian EU membership. In other words, status as a core party does not appear to have moderated Serbian parties' stances and their rhetoric on the EU, primarily due to the lack of a pro-EU consensus at the political core.

Conversely, there was a relatively consistent number of parliamentary parties in Croatia, with the Croatian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party being the most dominant from the very beginning of multi-party system. This stability of the party system created conditions conducive to the formation of a group of core mainstream (not necessary cartel) parties. Additionally, an informal 'Alliance for Europe' was established in the early 2000s. All major parliamentary parties thus pledged not to use Croatian EU accession during political confrontations. This included parties ideologically prone to

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<sup>19</sup>As a result, no relevant protest Eurosceptic parties emerged. The minor, non-parliamentary party Dveri was the only party that may be seen as a protest, anti-establishment party following its transformation from a political movement into a political party in 2011.

Euroscepticism, such as the Croatian Democratic Union or the Croatian Peasants' Party, and indirectly the Croatian Party of Rights, which was essentially a peripheral party. Unlike in Serbia, this consensus had an important moderating effect on these parties' rhetoric, although it did not change their broad, underlying position on the substance of European integration. While the Croatian Democratic Union transformed its position on the EU due to a number of strategic reasons (see Chapter 4), the two remaining parties, the Croatian Peasants' Party and the Croatian Party of Rights, remained soft and hard Eurosceptic, respectively. However, they all moderated their rhetoric, which was most visible in the case of the Croatian Party of Rights. The wider pro-EU consensus at the political core and the fear of marginalisation on the periphery of party system significantly tempered this party's Euroscepticism, and it did not object to Croatian EU accession in the mid and late 2000s. However, when the Croatian Party of Rights failed to position itself as a core party following poor election results, international isolation and having a radical right ideology, it turned back to its original position, strongly denouncing Croatian EU membership since 2011. Moreover, unlike in Serbia, the consensus in the Croatian political core consequently opened the space for a large number of small, peripheral, nationalistic and pronouncedly Eurosceptic parties to appear. To some extent, these parties managed to shape the domestic debate on the EU but failed to make any significant political impact or change the existing balance between the core parties that had dominated the Croatian government since the early 1990s.

### **5.3.2.2 Peripheral parties and attitudes towards the EU**

As in the case of core parties, this chapter did not find strong evidence indicating that party-based Euroscepticism in Serbia and Croatia was driven by a party's peripheral position, as has been argued in the comparative literature (Taggart 1998; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2000). While empirical data from Table 5.3 suggests that all peripheral parties were hard Eurosceptic, nevertheless their peripheral location in the party system only reinforced scepticism and impacted their rhetoric. However, with the notable exception of a few Croatian parties, a party's peripheral status did not solely determine its underlying stance on the EU.

This may be attributed to two key factors: the structure of these party systems and the prevalent nature of parties' opposition to Europe. First, as argued earlier in this chapter, the logic and structure of Serbian party systems did not create conditions for protest-based

Euroscepticism. Specifically, there was not a distinct group of core Euroenthusiastic parties, and Euroscepticism was present at the political core. As a result, protest Eurosceptic peripheral parties had no space in which to exploit this issue and underline its uniqueness, as argued in the comparative literature (Taggart 1998). Moreover, the lack of Western-style cartel parties consequently prevented the emergence of anti-cartel or anti-establishment parties; as a result, only one party, Dveri, emerged as a protest Eurosceptic party in 2012. In Croatia, the party system and the consensus among mainstream parties on the EU created conditions favourable to protest based anti-establishment Eurosceptic parties that appear to have been motivated by their peripheral status but equally, if not more importantly, by nationalist ideology. Second, as argued in Chapter 3, the majority of parties approached the EU ideologically. This trend may also be seen in the case of peripheral parties. All peripheral parties were hard Eurosceptic parties who objected the EU and opposed these countries' EU memberships in principle, and they appear to have been predominately ideologically driven, with a strong nationalist, conservative, and often radical right identity. Thus, a party's peripheral status served primarily as a reinforcement for already strong and identity-driven hostility or scepticism to the EU. Additionally, the rhetoric of peripheral parties was clearly shaped by, *inter alia*, their peripheral position.

Specifically, there were two types of peripheral parties that expressed hard Euroscepticism, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Radical Party, on the one side, and a number of minor, mostly non-parliamentary parties, on the other side. The Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Radical Party in the early 2000s may be characterized as peripheral. Their peripheral status at that time was the result of the fact that, after they were removed from power in 2000, both parties became 'anti-system'. These parties opposed 'the very system of government', as conceptualised by Sartori (1990, p.329), and did not share the values of the political order within which they operated. They also adopted a Eurosceptic stance, rejecting Serbian EU membership and opposing cooperation with the ICTY and the EU. As discussed in Chapter 4, the Socialists fundamentally changed over the years, while the Radicals accepted the political system, participating in the 2003 elections and consequently becoming the largest party in the parliament. Nevertheless, the Radicals did not deviate from their radical right ideology and, therefore, still exhibited some characteristics of peripheral parties. Following an electoral fiasco in the 2012 elections, the party did not manage to secure places in the parliament, and so returned to the position where, in many ways, it belonged: that is, the political periphery. However, the Euroscepticism expressed by the Serbian Socialists and Radicals does not appear to have been the result of their

peripheral position in the party system. Their stances were more deeply rooted in the ideology and policies of nationalism and isolationism that both parties propagated and implemented during the 1990s. The Radicals especially expressed a strong ideological opposition to the principles of liberal democracy, symbolised by the EU.

Conversely, a group of minor non-parliamentary and largely radical right, Eurosceptic parties emerged over the years, although many quickly disappeared from the political scene in both countries. What characterised these parties was both hard Euroscepticism manifested as strong opposition to Serbian/Croatian EU membership and a pronounced nationalistic ideology. As discussed earlier, despite a very large number of parties in Serbia, there were no conditions for the emergence of protest-based Eurosceptic parties that successfully presented themselves as a viable alternative to established, mainstream parties. The notable exception was Dveri which was founded before the 2012 parliamentary election after a decade of activities as a non-governmental organisation. This party's hard Euroscepticism can be primarily attributed to its ideology and pronounced conservatism as expressed by Vladan Glišić (Interview 2011), one of the party leaders.<sup>20</sup> The party's protest nature, however, significantly contributed to its rhetoric and how it used the issue of Serbian EU membership in domestic party competition.

Bakić (2013, p.2) argued that Dveri was a highly conservative party. He explained that it fostered extreme conservatism, promoting the family as the most important social institution and advocated a religious-moralistic outlook. This clerical party won a relatively high percentage of votes (4.34%) in 2012 and came close to securing seats in the parliament. Compared to other Serbian parties, Dveri garnered the most Eurosceptic electorate (see Table 6.3.), since 81% of its voters opposed Serbian EU accession (BCBP 2012). Bakić (2013) argued that it enjoyed the support of the more conservative parts of the Serbian Orthodox Church, war veterans, members of the armed forces, and the police.

Drawing upon Taggart's (1998) theoretical frameworks, Dveri can further be classified as a protest anti-establishment and hard Eurosceptic party. The main characteristic of this party was its anti-establishment nature, evident in the fact that it did not want to be called a 'party' but rather a 'movement', effectively emphasising its protest and anti-mainstream status. The party leadership emphasised that Dveri was not a party but the 'voice of the people' that would fight against the corrupt political mainstream and 'partocracy' (Dveri

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<sup>20</sup> The party did not have a leader but a leadership made of a few senior party leaders that made all political decisions.



2012a). Bakić (2013) also noted that this party sharply criticised the illegitimate oligarchic structure of the Serbian society. It thus stood for 'a change of not only the regime, but also the whole system in the country' (Dveri 2012a). In its programme, the party declared the failure of the current social contract between the Serbian people and the government, and therefore proposed 'a new national contract' (Dveri 2012a). The key element of such a contract would be an immediate suspension of negotiations with the EU, an analysis of the cost of the deals reached so far with the EU, and an orientation towards Russia as 'a natural, historical and political basic foundation of Serbian foreign policy' (Dveri 2012b). This party was, therefore, the only protest and Eurosceptic party in the country that failed to exert any significant impact or to change the balance between the mainstream parties, although it did somewhat shape the nature of the European debate in the run-up to the 2012 elections.

Given the nature of the party system in Croatia and the nation's wider political consensus on EU, a number of protest, conservative, and right-wing hard Eurosceptic parties emerged over the years. They mainly came from the tradition of the Croatian right, a conservative national political movement that developed in the mid-nineteenth century. This movement demanded greater Croatian autonomy and self-rule, with Croatian national and ethnic rights being central to its ideology. Until 2011, the only parliamentary party representing this political tradition was the Croatian Party of Rights. Following the 2011 elections it was replaced by the Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević, which secured only a single parliamentary seat. The hard Euroscepticism of these parties was based on opposition to the conditions imposed by the EU. These included cooperation with the ICTY and 'handing the heroes of the homeland war over', opposition to the pooling and delegation of the sovereignty in the EU, given that 'Croatia will lose its sovereignty and freedom that was achieved with difficulties during the homeland war', and fear that Croatia will lose its cultural and economic independence, national identity, and tradition (Stojić 2006, p. 329).

Another group of peripheral parties consisted of a number of short-lived, nationally oriented parties that had been founded by former members of right-wing factions of the Croatian Democratic Union. These politicians were defeated in the 2002 intra-party election as devotees of the former Croatian president Franjo Tuđman, and as a result founded a number of peripheral parties, such as Only Croatia, The Independence and Progress Party/Croatian Bell, and Croatian Growth-HRAST. However, none of these

parties managed to become a relevant political force in the country. Like Serbian Dveri, these Croatian parties strategically employed harsh rhetoric directed against the two core, mainstream parties, the Croatian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party. They accused them of betraying the nation through the sale of Croatian land and sea; hiding the results of the accession negotiations; and the semi-colonial position of the country. Croatian EU membership, as claimed by the Only Croatia's vice president Marjan Bošnjak (Interview 2011) in an interview, would mean joining 'Euroslavia', underlining the fears that the EU would be similar to the former Yugoslavia. However, these peripheral parties were highly unsuccessful in emphasising their 'outsider' status as a means to boost their electoral appeal. That may be attributed to the fact that they refused to engage with other political issues, since 'that would unnecessarily spread the debate to other areas, which was favoured by the Euro-fanatical elites, while the very survival of a state was at stake' (Bošnjak, Interview 2011). Finally, since 2010, a number of fringe, but not radical right or nationalistic parties, emerged in response to the financial crisis and Croatia's completion of its accession negotiations, including the Alliance for Change. This party exhibited typical characteristics of left-wing protest and anti-establishment parties, sharply criticising the supposedly neo-liberal nature of the EU and the potential negative economic consequences of Croatian EU membership. However, it failed to make any political impact.

In summary, while the parties of the Croatian right were deeply ideologically Eurosceptic, other peripheral parties appear to have been somewhat motivated by their fringe nature. They expressed protest-based Euroscepticism aimed against the Euroenthusiastic core and mainstream parties. Moreover, all of these parties emerged at times of either parliamentary elections, or more importantly, during the Croatian referendum on EU membership in 2012. However, given their ideological background, political genesis, and the arguments used to present their stances to the wider public, it remains difficult to assess the extent to which they were motivated by their ideologies or peripheral status.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This study draws a number of conclusions regarding the correlation between Serbian and Croatian parties' electoral performance and core/peripheral status, on the one side, and their views on Europe, on the other. Most notably, this study found that neither parties' governmental/opposition or their core/peripheral positions crucially determined their underlying stances on the substance of European integration. Instead, in most cases, these

positions were ideologically driven. The notable exceptions were strategically motivated former Eurosceptic parties whose opposition experience appears to have significantly contributed to their fundamental ideological transformation and eventual adoption of a Euroenthusiastic political agenda. However, the chapter also found that a party's position in the party system significantly impacted how parties used the EU issues in political competition. Specifically, governmental and core parties tended to express pro-EU attitudes, whereas peripheral (and, to a lesser extent, opposition) parties adopted Eurosceptic narratives.

This chapter specifically found that the nature of the party system and individual political parties had significant consequences for how parties responded to Europe. In other words, different features of the two parties systems in Serbia and Croatia created different opportunities for these parties to express Eurosceptic or Euroenthusiastic sentiments. In Serbia's highly fragmented 'polarised pluralistic system', EU issues, particularly different stances on Serbian EU membership, were the source of centrifugal drivers of the party systems and reflected a society divided between traditionalism and modernism. The Croatian party system was more moderate pluralistic with limited fragmentation, consisting of two dominant parties. Although moderate polarisation existed, it did not give rise to such sharp divisions between the relevant parties on EU issues. Consequently, the EU was not a contentious issue and all relevant parties reached a consensus on Croatian EU accession early in the negotiation process, which greatly moderated the party scene and discouraged pronounced Euroscepticism.

This chapter did not find empirical evidence to support hypothesis H3a *that the longer that parties are in opposition, the more likely that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. Government participation did not prove to be the determining factor in underlying party attitudes towards the EU in Serbia and Croatia. However, it had some moderating effects on rhetoric and specific policies pursued by governing parties, particularly former Eurosceptic parties, such as the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party, and the Croatian Democratic Union. After coming to power, these parties followed their strategic reorientation and pursued a pro-EU agenda in an effort to prove their new political orientation. However, their government involvement was a result of the transition undergone before coming to power, rather than the cause of it. In general, government participation discouraged Euroscepticism and reinforced the pro-European policies of the majority of the parties examined. Regardless, it did not determine them.

Furthermore, in contrast to Sitter's (2001) argument, opposition status not only failed to create incentives for the development of Eurosceptic sentiments but was an important factor that, *inter alia*, triggered hard Eurosceptic parties to adopt Euroenthusiastic positions. Specifically, there was no clearly established pattern of party competition that may have created conditions for 'opposition based' Euroscepticism. This was particularly the case in Serbia owing to its highly polarised and atomised party system, which resulted in the lack of stable patterns of competition between government and opposition parties. Moreover, this chapter identified a tendency for mainstream opposition parties in both countries to criticise governmental parties for not being pro-European enough, rather than encouraging them to become Eurosceptic. It also argued that for opposition parties, repeated exclusion from government was a consequence, not a cause of scepticism and hostility towards the EU. Pro-European attitudes seemed to be a necessary precondition for parties in (potential) candidate countries to attain power (given the role of 'external veto actors' i.e., the EU and the Western countries) as confirmed in the case of parties that secured government participation only after having previously abandoned their long-term Eurosceptic stances.

Most remarkably, the study found that opposition status played a crucial role in triggering the transformation of strategically driven parties from a hard Eurosceptic to pro-European pole. Specifically, a combination of two factors arising from the domestic party systems, namely the office- and vote-seeking character of the parties and opposition status, created conditions for the fundamental reorientation of three core parties: the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party and the Croatian Democratic Union. These parties initiated their transformation while in opposition after experiencing 'political ostracism'. They either lost elections for the first time since their founding or feared long-term opposition status after many unsuccessful attempts to form a government, which were strong strategic incentives to adopt a pro-EU political agenda.

Moreover, the data considered here did not support H3b hypothesis: *the more that parties are positioned towards the periphery of the party system, the more likely it is that they will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. More specifically, this chapter did not find strong evidence that a core position within the party system was a factor that shaped pro-EU party stances. The Euroenthusiasm of core parties was either consistent, ideologically driven or was the consequence of their strategically motivated transformation. Conversely, party rhetoric on Europe may have been impacted by a party's core status but only when there was a

consensus on Europe at the political core. Specifically, being core in the context of Serbian party politics does not appear to have had any moderating effect on party stances towards the EU, including party rhetoric, primarily due to the lack of pro-EU consensus at the political core, which gave parties considerable freedom to express Eurosceptic rhetoric. In Croatia, however, due to the wider EU consensus, core parties were discouraged from employing Eurosceptic rhetoric and were thus seen as out of the pro-EU core which, in turn, moderated their rhetoric, although it did not determine their broad, underlying stances.

Finally, this chapter did not find evidence to support the claim that party-based Euroscepticism in Serbia and Croatia was driven by a party's peripheral position. Rather, this study found that party peripheral status served primarily as a reinforcement for existent and mostly identity-driven hostility or scepticism towards the EU. This was primarily due to the structure of these party systems, particularly the Serbian ones, where, given the lack of pro-EU core as well as Western-style cartel parties, there was no space for Eurosceptic peripheral or anti-cartel parties to exploit this issue and underline their uniqueness. Thus, peripheral Euroscepticism was primarily rooted in an ideology of nationalism and opposition to the principles of liberal democracy as symbolised by the EU, rather than in the parties' deliberate strategic decision to be anti-European 'outsiders' (aimed at boosting their electorally effective 'peripheral uniqueness'). However, the rhetoric of peripheral parties was clearly shaped by their 'outsider' position and protest nature.

## **Chapter 6: Party attitudes towards the EU and relations with their electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups**

There are few debates in the classical party literature that have so attracted scholars' attention, but also deeply divided them, as the relationship between political elites and mass publics. This debate has specifically centred on the issue of whether parties respond to fluctuating public preferences when determining stances and formulating policies, or parties instead cue a mass public that lacks information on complex social issues. The purpose of this chapter is to examine this issue in relation to stances of Serbian and Croatian parties on European integration. The chapter seeks to understand whether these parties adopted or changed attitudes towards Europe in response to the preferences and interest of the general public, their core electorate as well as key socio-economic groups across both countries.

The chapter finds that, based on the available data, parties in general tended to ignore and did not respond to public preferences on the EU issues in these countries. This was primarily due to weak and unarticulated stances expressed by the general public and core voters, which consequently left considerable space for parties to manoeuvre on this issue and, in some cases, change stances. The EU was generally a 'difficult issue' for voters of most Serbian core parties; they had difficulties expressing their definite and firm views given contradictory relations between the EU and Serbia, the lack of wider political consensus on EU membership as well as outstanding statehood issues. The chapter also finds that while trade unions, non-governmental organisations and churches across both countries exerted limited impact on the formation of party preferences towards the EU, there are indications that parties were affected by the economic interests of financial and lobby groups when determining and shifting positions on this issue.

Party relations with the general public, their electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups have not been extensively covered by the existing literature on party stances towards Europe; this is therefore discussed in the first section of this chapter. After outlining the methodological framework, the chapter looks at general public opinion across both countries as a driver of party stances on the EU. It then examines in detail how core voters' preferences and concerns regarding the EU affected party stances and policies on

this issue, first in Serbia and then in Croatia. Given the available data, the empirical focus of this chapter is on core Serbian parties that shifted stances on the EU largely irrespective of impulses coming from the electoral constituencies. The chapter then discusses the impact of socio-economic groups, while the final section summarises the key arguments in relation to the proposed hypotheses.

### **6.1 Party attitudes towards the EU and relations with their electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups in the comparative literature**

The comparative literature on party attitudes towards the EU did not typically address the issue of how preferences of public opinion or party core voters may influence the formation of party positions on Europe. This matter remained in the background of the scholarly debates, which centred ideology and strategy as the most important drivers of party responses to Europe. Nevertheless, this issue relates to the general debate in the classical party literature on the nature of the relationship between the public and political elites, with two broad approaches to whether voters or political parties cue one another. The bottom-up approach, drawing on a rational choice perspective (Downs 1957), argued that voters' stances provide incentives for party positioning and that parties therefore respond to public preferences in the context of electoral competition. The top-down approach (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), however, made the claim that political parties cue the mass public, which does not possess enough information to form stances on complex social issues.

The debate on public opinion and the EU follows this pattern, with two opposing positions each supported by considerable evidence (Steenbergen et al., 2007). On the one side, the bottom-up approach assumed that publics possess well-developed and informed opinions on the EU, and consequently parties accommodate their preferences. Mass publics can therefore cue elites, which take positions on European integration that reflect public viewpoints (McLaren and Guerra 2013). Batory (2008a) pointed out that political parties are primarily vote-seeking organisations that position themselves in response to impulses received from the electorate, although not mechanically. She argued that parties may choose to accommodate public opinion for perceived competitive advantages. Therefore, party positions are influenced by the opinions of core voters, particularly in cases 'where strong constituency ties and economic vulnerability of the party's core electoral base to EU policies strengthen parties' incentives for taking up the European issue' (Batory 2008a, p.22). Konitzer (2011), looking at the transformation of former

Eurosceptic parties in Serbia and Croatia, specifically argued that the pressure of public opinion (together with external veto actors) created intra-party splits between ‘extroverts’, who wanted to improve their parties’ electoral prospects by following public trends, and ‘introverts’ who sought to maintain their parties’ current EU-sceptic/anti-EU course.

Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b, p.257), however, argued that whether parties use the European issue as an element of inter-party competition (not a party’s underlying stances on the EU) depends on other factors such as ‘the views of the party’s current supporters and potential target supporters (rather than voters as a whole) on the issue of European integration’. Alternately, parties may seek not to accommodate, but to anticipate ‘the public mood’ even in the absence of articulated electoral preferences on European issues (Batory 2008a). Batory specifically argued that parties may formulate policies by weighing the pros and cons of a particular position in terms of votes lost or gained, i.e., they strategically anticipate the voters’ reaction.

On the other side, vote-seeking considerations and strategy to accommodate voters’ preferences are not always the dominant factors in party behaviour. This major strand in the literature thus holds that partisanship shapes public opinion, and that there is a tendency for voters to adopt their preferred parties’ views on Europe. As Batory (2008a) specified, this may be due to the fact that voters’ preferences on issues of European integration are not sufficiently stable and well-defined to affect parties. Marks and Wilson (2000, p.434) stressed that ‘parties are not empty vessels into which issue positions are poured in response to electoral or constituency pressures, but organizations with historically rooted orientations that guide their response to new issues, such as European integration’. Moreover, parties may decide to deliberately shape public perception of this issue: Batory cited the example of the Hungarian Fidesz party, which fuelled and to some extent created Euroscepticism among its core supporters in 2002-03, demonstrating the power of partisanship in structuring public opinion.

A significant group of scholars, however, argued that the relationship between parties’, core voters’ and public stances on the EU is not so straightforward. Steenbergen et al. (2007), for example, found statistical evidence that party elites both respond to and shape the views of their supporters on European integration, and that bottom-up and top-down processes are mutually reinforcing. This is due to the fact that ‘it is increasingly costly for political parties to ignore public opinion’ but also that public views are not ‘completely



determined and unsusceptible to persuasion and information' (Steenbergen et al. 2007, p.18). How these two processes operate, they claimed, depends on the type of electoral system, the proximity of elections and referendums, the salience of EU issues, intra-party dissent and the characteristics of party supporters. Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001, p.12), examining the reasons for a misfit between public- and party-based Euroscepticism, contended that the dynamics of domestic competition may account for parties' position on Europe in relation to their voters' or public preferences. Domestic party competition, these authors argued, may increase strategic incentives for parties to differentiate themselves and therefore might lead them to become Eurosceptic even though popular Euroscepticism may be low. Conversely, where there may be high levels of popular Euroscepticism, the dynamics of the party system may create incentives for parties to form coalitions, so that Euroscepticism is minimised in the parties in favour of a consensus. Similarly, Sitter and Batory (2008) made a case that incentives to contest European integration depend on public opinion among the party's target electorate, but also on the position of other parties on this issue. They concluded that parties may face incentives to conform to broader pro-EU consensus if the majority of the electorate and other parties express pro-European stances.

Furthermore, to assess the relation between voters' and parties' preferences towards Europe, the salience of European issues for both voters and parties appears to be of critical importance. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b) thus emphasised that the level of support for, or opposition to, European integration and, critically, the salience of this issue among the party's (potential) supporters are among the key variables that determine how parties use European issues in political contestation. Similarly, when assessing why high levels of public hard Euroscepticism did not find expression in some party systems and vice versa, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001) found that the fact that European integration was a 'second-order issue' may be an explanation. More specifically, Taggart and Szczerbiak (2002) later argued that the most plausible reason for the mismatch between public and party Euroscepticism is low popular salience of European issues. As a result, they argued, there were no incentives for parties to harden their Eurosceptic stance and no disincentives for pro-EU parties to continue supporting the European project. However, Steenbergen et al. (2007) did not find persuasive evidence that the salience of the EU issue impacts the bottom-up link between voters and parties. They did observe a statistically significant effect from voters on elites' stances, but this effect 'is slightly larger when the issue is less salient to the party' (Steenbergen et al. 2007, p.27).

Finally, the chapter briefly looks at the linkages between socio-economic groups and parties – that is, the potential effect of the preferences of socio-economic groups on party positions on Europe. It specifically examines the lobby groups, trade unions, non-governmental organisations and national churches. This relationship has been under-researched in the comparative literature. Batory (2008a), for example, contended that organised interests formally or informally exercise varying degrees of influence on party policy, and noted the strong links of some socialist parties with trade unions, and Christian democratic or conservative parties with churches. Batory (2008a, p.23) argued that a change in the trade union's stance on European integration was shown to have had a significant impact on socialist parties' changing attitudes to this issue. She pointed out the cases of the British Trade Union Congress endorsing a pro-EC stance, which clearly contributed to the policy shift of Labour at the end of the 1980s as well as the German Social Democratic Party's acceptance of the European Coal and Steel Community in the 1950s (the latter also partly reflected trade union pressures). The linkages between parties' positions and business have been particularly under-researched. The lack of investigation of these issues may be attributed to the difficulties in getting reliable data and the unwillingness of many sources to be interviewed, as pointed out by Copsey and Haughton (2009). Nevertheless, as Copsey and Haughton (2009, p.282) argued, there is a widespread perception that business interests are privileged in Central and Eastern European countries, where the boundaries between legitimate lobbying and illegal pressures are often blurred and unclear.

Based on the review of the comparative literature and given that this thesis deals with party, rather than public, attitudes towards the EU, it seeks to test the following hypotheses:

H4a: The more that the general public opinion is Eurosceptic, the more likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;

H4b: The more parties' electoral constituencies are Eurosceptic, the more likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;

H4c: The more socio-economic groups (financial and lobby groups, trade unions, non-governmental organisations and national churches) are Eurosceptic, the more likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes.

## 6.2 Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to examine the extent to which parties' attitudes towards the EU were influenced by attitudes and interests of their core voters and socio-economic groups in Serbia and Croatia. In order to examine the relationship between parties' responses to Europe and stances of their electoral constituencies, data on parties' core voters' preferences were obtained from a number of reliable public opinion agencies, non-governmental organisations and media (CESID, B92, Politika, Ipsos, Puls). The quantitative data were supplemented by qualitative data collected from interviews with senior party officials, who were asked to assess their parties' relations with electoral constituencies and whether they consider these relations important or not for determining party policies and stances on the EU. The main methodological issue was the lack of complete and long-time data series on how core party voters formed and changed attitudes towards the EU and these countries' EU memberships; this occurred particularly in Croatia, where the data used covered only the period after October 2008. This was to some extent offset by data on the public opinion of the EU, which may provide some broad indications of general voters' perceptions of the EU.

On the other side, it was particularly challenging to explore the linkages between parties' positions on Europe and social-economic groups, given a blurred and not transparent relation between parties and these groups in both countries. While it was somewhat easier to find information on trade unions, non-governmental organisations and churches, the role of financial and lobby groups was more difficult to disentangle. Therefore, given the unwillingness of politicians to talk about party links with big businesses and lobby groups, most of the data were collected from the interviews with country experts and political analysts as well as from statements of former senior politicians that, after withdrawing from the offices, provided some evidence of the relationship between parties and organised business interests.

## 6.3 Party attitudes towards the EU and public opinion

Before examining core voters' preferences for Europe, this section looks at the positions of general publics on Europe and how parties (if at all) respond to it. It specifically examines public and party-based Euroscepticism, aimed at assessing whether Eurosceptic parties reacted to changing levels of public Euroscepticism across both countries.

The level of Serbian and Croatian public Euroscepticism and the electoral results of parties that were characterised as soft or hard Eurosceptic in Chapter 2 are presented in Tables 6.1 and 6.2. Both countries seem to confirm the arguments that ‘the high levels of public Euroscepticism do not necessarily translate into high levels of support for parties expressing Euroscepticism’ and vice versa (Taggart and Szczesbiak 2002, p.22). Moreover, the tables suggest that over time in both countries a mismatch between the positions of parties, i.e., political elites, and the public on the EU became even more pronounced. Precisely as public Euroscepticism grew, the support for parties expressing Eurosceptic stances declined across both countries, as seen in Croatia since 2003 and in Serbia since 2008.

Table 6.1: Serbian public and party-based Euroscepticism  
*Sources:* Serbian Electoral Commission (2012), SEIO (2012)

	<b>December 2003</b>	<b>January 2007</b>	<b>May 2008</b>	<b>May 2012</b>
<b>% of votes for Eurosceptic parties</b>	<b>Total: 35.23%</b>  27.61% (Serbian Radical Party)  7.62% (Socialist Party of Serbia)	<b>Total: 34.24%</b>  28.6% (Serbian Radical Party)  5.64% (Socialist Party of Serbia)	<b>Total: 48.6%</b>  29.4% (Serbian Radical Party)  11.6% (Democratic Party of Serbia/New Serbia)  7.6% (Socialist Party of Serbia)	<b>Total: 15.95%</b>  7% (Democratic Party of Serbia)  4.61% (Serbian Radical Party)  4.34% (Dveri)
<b>% of public that would vote against EU membership at a referendum</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>12.3%</b> ( <i>Sept 2006</i> )	<b>12%</b>	<b>29%</b> ( <i>June 2012</i> )

In Serbia, until the 2008 proclamation of Kosovo’s independence, a distinct minority of citizens were against the country’s EU membership – between 8% and 12.3% (SEIO 2012). At the same time, though, the biggest party in the parliament was the hard Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party, which, together with the Socialist Party of Serbia, got more than a third of the total votes. Over time public opinion became significantly more Eurosceptic: 33% of the population in late 2011 opposed Serbian EU membership (SEIO 2012). However, at the same time the percentage of votes for Eurosceptic parties dramatically decreased, mainly due to the fact that the newly founded and pro-European Serbian

Progressive Party took a large portion of the Radicals' voters. Therefore, Euroscepticism was significantly more present in the parliament and among political elites than among the public until 2008. However, after 2008, the growing public opposition to the EU was not reflected in the electoral success of Eurosceptic parties, which lost political relevance (although remained more important than in Croatia) and became either non-parliamentary (the Serbian Radical Party) or small parliamentary parties (the Democratic Party of Serbia) while the vast majority of parties remained pro-European.

In Croatia, the same tendency for growing public Euroscepticism to not be reflected in the votes for Eurosceptic parties was obvious from the early 2000s. Although public opinion became increasingly Eurosceptic in late 2003 (see LSE 2013), following the reorientation of the Croatian Democratic Union, Eurosceptic parties were still minor, peripheral parties that faced difficulties in crossing the electoral threshold and securing parliamentary seats. The pro-EU agendas of Croatian parties were thus in contrast to the growing public opposition to Croatian EU membership (particularly pronounced since 2004), although the overwhelming majority of the public still supported Croatian EU accession. In other words, Croatian parties did not largely accommodate public Euroscepticism, which was unrepresented in the political arena (or, rather, represented by protest movements and fringe radical right parties, as discussed in Chapter 5). At the same, Eurosceptic voters did not vote for parties with Eurosceptic political platforms.

Table 6.2: Croatian public and party-based Euroscepticism

Sources: Štulhofer (2006), Ipsos Puls (2011), Croatian Electoral Commission (2012b), LSE (2013)

	<b>January 2000</b>	<b>November 2003</b>	<b>November 2007</b>	<b>December 2011</b>
<b>% of votes for Eurosceptic parties</b>	<b>Total: 32.07%</b>  26.88% (Croatian Democratic Union)  5.19% (Croatian Party of Rights)	<b>Total: 6.4%</b>  6.4% (Croatian Party of Rights)	<b>Total: 5.27%</b>  3.5% (Croatian Party of Rights)  1.7% (Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonia and Baranja)	<b>Total: 8.78%</b>  2.8% (Croatian Party of Rights-Dr Ante Starčević)  3% Croatian Party of Rights)  2.96% (Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonija and Baranja)
<b>% of public that would vote against EU membership at a referendum</b>	<b>7.9%</b> ( <i>June 2000</i> )	<b>20.3%</b> ( <i>Dec 2003</i> )	<b>37%</b> ( <i>Sept. 2007</i> )	<b>36%</b> ( <i>Nov 2011</i> )

This may be due to the way Eurosceptic parties framed their opposition to the EU and conducted election campaigns, but also due to the low salience of European issues for the general public. Bogosavljević (2007) confirmed that EU issues have never been a priority for the Serbian public. He argued that the most salient issues in public opinion polls were unemployment, living standards, crime and corruption, as well as Kosovo, while ‘almost never’ Serbian EU integration. Similarly, according to another survey (FBD 2013), more than 90% of the public gave priority to the economic development of the country, 61% prioritised the issue of Kosovo, while 48% stated that Serbian EU integration was an important issue. Antić (2012), furthermore, argued that the issue of the EU has failed to become important and that it did not shape the voting preferences of the majority of Serbian voters. Antić (2012, p.107) specified that the impact an issue can have on voting behaviour depends on ‘its emotional depth and ideational centrality’. He concluded that Eurosceptic voters have relatively recently adopted such a standpoint and that it would take time to become more deeply grounded in the electorate.

Regardless, what is more important for this study is that, in general, it seems that parties across both countries did not formulate policies based on public opinion and that there was a very weak relationship between party and public attitudes towards the EU. This is a rather surprising finding given that a number of scholars (Vachudova 2006; Konitzer 2011) argued that the public (rather than core voters) exerted significant impact on parties when they adopt and change stances on the EU in (potential) candidate countries. Therefore, looking at public opinion may give us only a very broad picture and does not indicate how individual parties formulate and change stances on the EU in relation to strategic incentives coming from the electorate. Therefore, the position of a party's core voters appears to be a better indicator and this will be examined in the following section.

#### **6.4 Party attitudes towards the EU and their electoral constituencies**

This section deals with the stances of political parties and their core voters on Europe. It first presents data on Serbia voters' preferences for EU membership and the EU (Tables 6.3-6.6), followed by an examination of the stances of individual parties and their constituencies most relevant to this study. The data on core electorate preferences for Europe expressed by Croatian political parties are separately discussed in the last part of this section.

The most striking tendency presented in Table 6.3 is the significant variation in core voters' stances on the EU over time. In other words, the electorate of Serbian parties, with the exception of the most Euroenthusiastic Democratic Party and Liberal Democratic Party, did not have a consistent attitude towards Serbian EU membership. Similar percentages of voters for the same parties were in favour of and against Serbian EU membership, while the majority of voters fluctuated between support and opposition over time; this was most evident in the cases of the Democratic Party of Serbia as well as the Serbian Progressive and Socialist parties. Even the majority of the electorate of the hard Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party was in favour of EU membership in mid-2000s.

Table 6.3: Attitudes of Serbian parties' voters towards Serbian EU membership

Sources: CESID (2005, 2009), Evropski forum (2005), Pantić (2007), B92 (2012a), BCBP (2012), Politika (2012)

	Democratic Party	Serbian Progressive Party	Socialist Party of Serbia	Democratic Party of Serbia	Liberal Democratic Party	G17 Plus/ United Regions of Serbia	Serbian Radical Party
	In favour Against No stance	In favour Against No stance	In favour Against No stance	In favour Against No stance	In favour Against No stance	In favour Against No stance	In favour Against No stance
January 2005	93% 1% -	- - -	67% 25% -	86% 4% -	- - -	87% 9% -	66% 23% -
Spring 2005	97% - -	- - -	49% - -	87% - -	- - -	- - -	52% - -
June 2007	92% 3% -	- - -	46% 23% -	79% 6% -	91% 0% -	82% 14% -	42% 36% -
September 2009	94% 2% 2%	59% 23% 4%	65% 24% 3%	72% 15% 8%	91% 2% 3%	- - -	47% 44% 2%
January 2012	82 % 9% 8%	27% 56% 16%	52% 34% 13%	25% 60% 14%	91% 5% 2%	69% 13% 17%	5% 85% 8%
April 2012	88% - -	39% 51% -	37% 42% -	42% 44% -	86% - -	- - -	17% 69% -
September 2012	70% - -	37% 48% -	51% <sup>21</sup> 36% -	49% 29% -	72% - -	53% 43% -	17% 66% -

<sup>21</sup> Voters of the Socialist Party of Serbia, United Serbia, the Party of United Pensioners of Serbia



Figure 6.1 also shows a sharp decrease of Euroenthusiasm among core voters of almost all parties in early 2012, which coincided with the declaration of Kosovo's independence that was *de facto* supported by EU. This further indicates that voters' attitudes towards EU membership generally were not deeply rooted. Their stances depended on concrete events and situations, and were situational and prone to changes.

Figure 6.1: Support for Serbian EU membership by party electorates (based on data in Table 6.3)

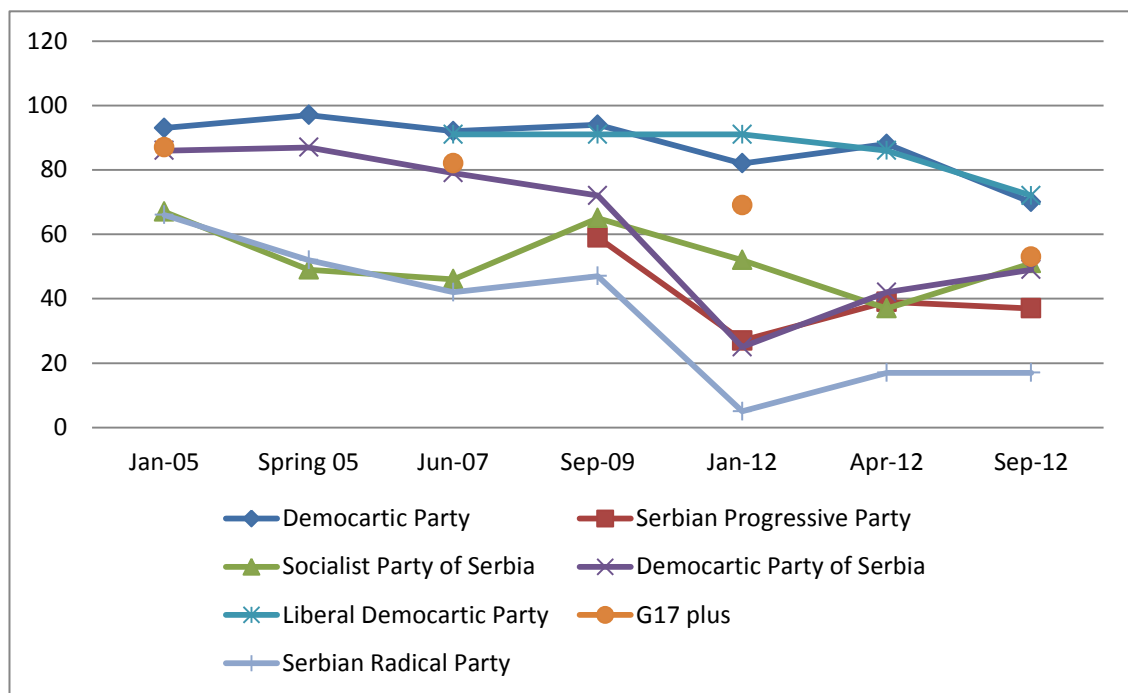


Table 6.4 provides additional insight into preferences of the core voters for Serbian parties. Given that after 2008, the key contentious issue that strongly polarised the public and political parties was whether the recognition of Kosovo was a precondition for Serbian EU membership, Table 6.4 indicates what kind of impulses political parties received from their voters in this respect. What is striking is that an overwhelming majority of the core electorates of parties that prioritised EU membership over Kosovo, including former Eurosceptic and nationalistic parties (Serbian Progressive Party, Socialist Party of Serbia), actually chose Kosovo over the EU. This further indicates the mismatch between voters and the parties for which they voted. Also, this may indirectly signify that for Serbian voters (unlike the parties) EU membership was not an issue of highest priority; electorates were more concerned with the status of Kosovo.

Table 6.4: Preference of Serbian parties' core voters for either Kosovo staying in Serbia or Serbian EU membership

*Source:* B92 (2012b)

Political party	Kosovo	EU membership
Serbian Progressive Party	78%	14%
Socialist Party of Serbia	77%	9%
Democratic Party of Serbia	64%	24%
Democratic Party	46%	43%
Liberal Democratic Party	8%	74%

Finally, Table 6.5, which provides a more comprehensive picture of voters' attitudes towards the EU as such (not Serbian EU membership), suggests confusing and changeable attitude towards the EU. A large number of voters of almost all parties (with the exception of the Liberal Democratic Party and to some extent the Democratic Party) did not have an opinion, or had a neutral stance on the EU, with many core voters equally divided between those who had positive and negative attitudes towards the EU (the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party, and the Democratic Party of Serbia).

Table 6.5: Attitudes of Serbian parties' voters towards the European Union

Sources: Evropski forum (2005), CESID (2008, 2009)

	Democratic Party				Serbian Progressive Party				Socialist Party of Serbia				Democratic Party of Serbia				Liberal Democratic Party				G17 Plus				Serbian Radical Party			
	Euroenthusiasts	Eurorealists	Eurosceptics	Europhobes	Euroenthusiasts	Eurorealists	Euroseptic	Europhobes	Euroenthusiasts	Eurorealists	Euroseptic	Europhobes	Euroenthusiasts	Eurorealists	Euroseptic	Europhobes	Euroenthusiasts	Eurorealists	Euroseptic	Europhobes	Euroenthusiasts	Eurorealists	Euroseptic	Europhobes	Euroenthusiasts	Eurorealists	Euroseptic	Europhobes
Jan. 2005	37%	42%	-	-	-	-	-	-	0%	12%	47%	41%	17%	51%	24%	-	-	-	-	-	44%	42%	-	-	8%	20%	41%	31%
	Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances		Pro-European	Anti-European	Both stances	
Dec. 07/ Jan. 08	51%	19%	30%		-	-	-		8%	66%	27%		18%	40%	42%		69%	15%	16%		35%	19%	46%		3%	67%	30%	
April/ May 2008	81%	6%	13%		-	-	-		24%	60%	16%		30%	30%	40%		96%	1%	3%		-	-	-		11%	59%	30%	
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance	Positive	Negative	Neutral	No stance
Sept. 09	59%	3%	21%	17%	22%	27%	30%	21%	28%	21%	25%	26%	28%	26%	27%	19%	67%	3%	14%	16%	-	-	-	-	14%	40%	21%	25%

*Notes* (Table 6.5)

- Evropski forum (2005):  
Euroenthusiasts: 'Europe is very close to me and I think that we must do every effort to join it, which includes fulfilling all conditions that it sets'  
Eurorealists: 'I cannot say that Europe is particularly close to me, but I think that the integration in the EU is necessary and that we must work on that'  
Eurosceptics: 'I am doubtful about the intentions of Europe and the West in general, and I think that we must go very cautiously and slowly in possibly integrating into its structures'  
Europhobes: 'Integration with Europe would mean the domination of European and other powers over our nation, Serbia does not belong to that world and so we should nurture our traditional values and not get caught up in the European rat-race'.
- Cesid (2008): The respondents were asked to respond to the following statements: 'EU membership will bring us more benefit than harm'; 'NATO cannot bring any good to our country'; 'Europe and the world do not let us mind our own business'; 'the Western world is full of injustice, corruption and crime and the new world order wants to turn our country into a colony'.
- Cesid (2009): The following statements were used to measure Serbian party voters' attitudes towards the EU: 'the EU is a guarantor of peace, stability and development of Serbia'; 'by joining the EU, we risk losing our identity and culture'; 'the EU is a system where rules are known, where it is well known who does what'; 'the EU is full of injustice and malice'; 'in the EU, people have solidarity, the rich help the poor'; 'the EU wants us only because of their own interests (cheap labour, healthy food and water)'; 'the EU wants to help us fight poverty and become "normal"'; 'it is in the interest of the EU that we become part of it, in order that they may control us more easily'; 'the relationship between the EU and Serbia should be built on clear interests of both sides'; 'the EU is just an idea, utopia, a dream that does not exist at all'.

In summary, data from the tables suggest that the majority of parties did not face clear and consistent pressures coming from their electoral constituencies regarding the EU. As Pantić (2007) identified, EU issues very often divided voters of the same party and as a consequence, there was a discrepancy between parties' positions and the attitudes of their electorates (most evident in the case of the Serbian Radical Party in 2005, in Table 6.3). The majority of parties, therefore, had considerable space to manoeuvre on this issue. The lack of articulated core voter positioning on the EU was due to the fact that the EU was generally a 'difficult issue' for voters of Serbian parties. They had 'mixed' views about the EU and had difficulties expressing their definite and firm positions. In other words, it appears that core voters of the majority of Serbian parties did not know what to think about the EU, and that allowed parties to relatively easily change stances and policies on this issue. The striking volatility and variation in opinions on the EU within the electorate of the majority of Serbian parties was not surprising. It was due to a contradictory and complex relationship between the EU and Serbia (as discussed in Chapter 1), and the lack of wider political discussion (or consensus) on Serbian EU accession that did not provide a basis for a more stable and informed voter's stance on this issue.

In addition, there was a mismatch between the generally higher percentage of voters supporting Serbia EU membership (Table 6.3) and the lower percentage of those expressing positive sentiments on the EU (Table 6.5). Pantić (2007, p.308) also noticed this discrepancy – between very low confidence in the EU and relatively high support for Serbian EU membership, which has been consistently present in the Serbian public since the early 1990s. He argued that this was the consequence of conflict between the rational and emotional elements of Serbian voters' perceptions of the EU. While the former generated a rational perception of potentially significant benefits of EU membership (as he put it, 'the famous phrase of better life'), the latter resulted in predominantly negative sentiments about the EU.

The remainder of this chapter examines how individual parties determined positions on the EU and looks at cases characterised by either continuity or change in their responses to Europe. However, it particularly focuses on empirically interesting cases of parties that shifted positions on the EU and/or Serbian EU membership (the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Serbian Progressive Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia), while their core voters tended to adopt confusing and inarticulate views on this issue, as shown in the tables presented. The rationale behind this lies in the fact that, as discussed in Chapter 4, the first two of these parties strategically shifted positions on the EU and ideologically transformed, so one may expect that voters' preferences on Europe played an important role. Conversely, the Democratic Party of Serbia is explored as a case of principled response to Europe and, as a result, one may expect that core voters' concerns about Europe and electoral incentives did not play an important role. Both prepositions are examined in the following sections.

#### **6.4.1 The Socialist Party of Serbia**

The party of former Serbian and Yugoslav president Slobodan Milošević has completely transformed its policies since 2000, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, and proclaimed the integration of Serbia into the EU as one of its strategic goals. To what extent was the new party position influenced by the attitudes of its core voters?

Traditionally, this was a party of the rural and elderly supporters that were mainly poor, poorly educated, conservative, and prone to nationalism and a belief in the authoritarian role of state (Stojiljković 2007). They were also characterised by their opposition to change, favouring centralization, lack of trust in other nations, and very little confidence in the

domestic party system (Goati 2006). In mid-2005, 49% of the party electorate supported Serbian EU membership (Goati 2006), while another study in the same period revealed that 67% of the party supporters were in favour of it (Evropski forum 2005). However, a closer analysis of the core electorate's attitudes towards the EU as such showed a high degree of Europhobia and Euroscepticism (88% of the party electorate) (Evropski forum 2005) and the prevailing anti-European sentiments (66% of the core voters) (CESID 2008). Additionally, 76% of party supporters had a negative perception and only 3% expressed a positive attitude towards cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, which was the most important condition for Serbia's EU accession (Goati 2006). Nevertheless, the party leadership made the strategic decision to adopt a pro-EU political platform, and for the first time it proclaimed EU accession as its goal at the 2003 party Congress despite a rather Eurosceptic core electorate. Goati (2006) argued that the mismatch between leadership and core electorate may be due to the usual time lag that occurs when supporters follow the party's programmatic transformations, but also the fact that they disagreed with the new pro-European orientation of the leadership.

Over time, the differences between core voters' and leaders' positions on the EU have become more pronounced, as shown in Table 6.3. Namely, as the party gradually transformed, moving away from a nationalistic and Eurosceptic legacy, the core electorate became noticeably more Eurosceptic. In spring 2008, the party did a political U-turn and joined a pro-European government, while 60% of its electorate expressed anti-European sentiments (Cesid 2008). A year later, only 28% of the party electorate had positive attitudes towards the EU (Cesid 2009). However, 65% of its core voters were in favour of Serbian EU accession at the same time (Cesid 2009), but their Euroenthusiasm significantly dropped and in the run up to the 2012 election: 37% supported, while 42% opposed Serbian EU membership (B92 2012a).

Why did the party leadership, which was aware of the essentially Eurosceptic sentiments of its core voters, nevertheless decide to fundamentally change ideology and key policies? As discussed in Chapter 4, this was a strategically motivated decision, yet the concerns and preferences of core voters were apparently ignored. This was confirmed by the party vice president, Vukomanović (Interview 2001), who argued that the Socialist Party of Serbia has never conducted a survey among its core voters on what they think of Serbian EU accession. She explained, 'the party does not carry out a continuous survey to find out what most of voters think about some issue and then, based on the results, puts (or not)

something on the political agenda as a priority'. However, she emphasised that 'the party leader, Ivica Dačić, made the most important decision, and decided to support a reform-minded and pro-European Democratic Party's agenda at the cost of misunderstanding among the electorate in 2008'. In his address to party members at the twentieth party congress, Dačić revealed that it was a difficult decision by saying:

You remember that everybody was talking that it would be a wrong and disastrous decision for our party, and many of you expressed the same opinion [...] However, I proposed such a decision, risked my position as party president and said: We will make a step forward because it is not only in the interest of the party, but because it is in the interest of Serbia (SPS 2012).

As a consequence, the fundamental transformation of party attitudes was neither the result of core voters' aspirations for modernisation and the abandonment of nationalistic and Eurosceptic policies, nor their desire for Serbia to join the EU. On the contrary, the party leadership was faced with opposition from a considerable section of the electorate when it decided to support the pro-European government and sign a cooperation agreement in 2008 with a long-time political adversary – the Democratic Party. This seems to be a paradox given that the party appears to be principally vote- and office-seeking, which means that voters' stances should be among the crucial driving factor when formulating and changing key policies.

However, strategic incentives not directly related to core voters' stances on this issue created conditions for the party transformation. As discussed in Chapter 4, these were 'non-coalitionability', international isolation, a strong nationalist legacy and the fact that Eurosceptic political space was already taken by the Radicals. The party did face shrinking electoral support, but it did not respond to the impulses coming from core voters when it shifted its stance on Europe. This may be due to the fact that although the Socialists' voters were fundamentally Eurosceptic, as shown in Table 6.4, they did not have a fully firm position on this issue. Table 6.3 shows that the majority of voters did not express stable viewpoints on Serbian EU accession, demonstrating both opposition and support for it at different times. In other words, as Žegarac (2012, p.159) found, this party's voters remained undecided on many issues and had an 'ambivalent attitude towards the EU'. Therefore, on this matter, the party leaders did not face strong, coherent voter preferences that needed to be accommodated. As a result, they assessed that a shift of stances on the EU would not cause a sharp decline in popularity and that the party electorate would gradually accept the new direction.

The fact that core voters did not withhold their support may be due to the party leadership's strategy. To explain and justify the apparent shift of policies, they linked Serbian EU membership with the concerns about socio-economic status expressed by their voters. The party emphasised that these issues, which were an absolute priority for the public (Bogosavljević 2007), could only be solved if Serbia joined the EU. In addition, in the 2008 election campaign, the party deliberately downplayed the issue of EU membership and did not elaborate a clear position on it in an attempt to not provoke dissent from the electorate. One may argue that EU accession was not the most salient issue for the party's electorate, given that the general public did not prioritise this issue, as found by Bogosavljević (2007). However, given the lack of precise data on salience, one can only speculate about it and further research is needed.

In summary, although essentially vote seeking, the party ignored the Eurosceptic stance of its core voters and strategic incentives to stay the same and not transform. In other words, the Socialists remained irresponsive to the preferences of their electoral constituencies. This was largely the result of a lack of articulated impulses regarding this issue that came from 'the bottom'. Other, stronger strategic incentives to embark on the pro-European transformation (as discussed in Chapter 4) prevailed. The party leaders also successfully employed strategy and rhetoric to explain this transformation and neutralise the eventual dissent among voters. Consequently, although the views of the party's core voters were more Eurosceptic than the policies pursued by the party leadership throughout the period analysed, the party won more votes in 2012 than in the previous elections. This confirmed that voters did not punish the Socialists because of their transformation.

#### **6.4.2 The Serbian Progressive Party**

The strategically driven transformation of the Serbian Progressive Party, on the other side, was even more remarkable, given a strong and consistent mismatch between the pro-European stances of (and policies pursued by) the party and the pronounced Euroscepticism that permeated the party constituency. It appears therefore that, out of all Serbian parties, it is least likely that the leaders of this party were guided by their core voters' preferences when formulating key party policies regarding the EU.

Bearing in mind that this is a newly formed party, the structure of its core electorate has not been identified and explored by scholars (Orlović 2011). What is highly likely is that this party took much of the electorate of the Serbian Radical Party, which, according to



Orlović, meant that its supporters were mainly the middle-aged, unemployed pensioners and housewives. On the other hand, a member of the party's executive committee, Marko Djurić (Interview, 2011), argued in an interview that most members of the Serbian Progressive Party were people who were not members or did not vote for the Radicals. He specifically claimed that according to party research, the party electorate was not dominated by Radical voters, who constituted only 35-40% of the total electorate.

What is less debatable is the pronounced Euroscepticism expressed by the party core electorate. Tables clearly demonstrate that there was a considerable degree of mismatch between the pro-European attitudes of the party elite and the Euroscepticism expressed by its voters. The data in Table 6.3 shows that in 2012 more than half of the party electorate was against Serbian EU accession (51% and 56%), while only between 27% and 39% was in favour of it (Politika 2012, B92 2012a). Additionally, the analysis of attitudes towards the EU as such (Cesid 2009) shows that 22% of the party electorate expressed positive sentiments, while 27% had a negative attitude towards the EU; this further highlights the discrepancy between the orientation of the voters and the party leadership.

At first glance there was a paradox, since this essentially vote- and office-driven party, which should be primarily concerned with voters' preferences, was not motivated by impulses coming from its voters with regard to the EU. Žegarac (2012) also found in her research on the structure of the Progressives' voters that, although the party made it clear that it would continue negotiations on EU membership, its voters did not provide support for such a policy. They were even more consistently Eurosceptic than the Socialists, which was not surprising given the anti-Europeanism of the former Radical voters (see Table 6.5), who seemed to constitute a significant proportion of the Progressives' electorate. Moreover, unlike the Socialists, this party even overplayed the issue of Serbian EU membership in domestic party politics. Their newly formulated pro-European orientation was the party's key trait, which permeated all party politics. Pro-Europeanism was strongly emphasised by the new leadership due to the desire to distance them from their nationalist and Eurosceptic political legacy. It was '*differentia specifica*' that came to symbolise the party's break with its tainted political legacy and a sign of political legitimisation.

Why does it appear that the party ignored voters? It seems that other strategic incentives outweighed core voters' preferences. Crucially, the party leadership assessed that voters will vote for the Progressives for another reasons, not because of their support for Serbian EU

accession. Party leader Vučić (2012) explicitly stated, ‘50% of the party electorate was against EU accession, 40% was in favour, while 10% did have a stance on this issue, but they still voted for the party due to other reasons’. He specified that ‘we made a clear decision, it is our job to say “we are going this way!” and to tell people things that they would not like to hear’, without courting them. As in the case of the Socialists, ‘non-coalitionability, pariah status in the international community, a series of unsuccessful attempts to get power, relatively advanced EU integration and irreversible trade links with the EU affected the former leaders of the Serbian Radical Party in order to fundamentally shift their position on Europe and strategically undergo an ideological transformation, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Long-term rather than short-term strategic considerations about coming to power influenced party leaders. In other words, they assessed that in the long run, a pro-EU political agenda would be accepted by the voters. The new party also appeared to decide to expand its electoral bases to become a catch-all, mainstream party, and changing its attitude towards the EU was crucial to the success of this transformation. It focused on new potential voters, coming from the broader public, that were mainly conservative and dissatisfied with the result of the political and economic transition, but at the same time not absolutely Eurosceptic. This may account for some difference between the Progressives’ and Radicals’ voter stances in Table 6.3.

What was also striking is the fact that 51% of the party’s core voters expressed a neutral position on the EU or did not have any attitude towards it (see Table 6.5). This may be important data, showing a rather confusing position on the EU among its electorate, although scepticism did prevail. In other words, similar to the Socialists’ electorate, it seems that Serbia’s EU accession was ‘a difficult issue’ – voters had problems expressing their views on this and did not have a definite and firm stance. A large majority of party voters did not view the EU favourably, as shown in the 2012 survey (Table 6.3). They voted for the party standing for Serbian EU accession, most likely considering that EU accession is inevitable or economically desirable. As a result, the party found it easier to manoeuvre on this issue, and to change position when faced with the lack of fully articulated impulses coming from voters.

A high percentage of negative and neutral positions on the EU may also indicate that the EU was not an issue of utmost priority for voters. This could be the reason why the party

elite opted for a pro-European orientation regardless of the majority opinion of the electorate, who apparently prioritised other issues (socio-economic ones). However, again, no reliable data to support this hypothesis can be provided at this point. The party's electorate remained Eurosceptic, while the strategy of attracting more voters was highly successful given that the party won the 2012 parliamentary and presidential election, paradoxically on pro-EU platform, which was followed by the robust Eurosceptic agenda of the government.

#### 6.4.3 The Democratic Party of Serbia

The Democratic Party of Serbia supported and, as a ruling party, substantially contributed to Serbian EU integration until 2008, despite a very critical attitude towards cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. However, following the proclamation of the independence of Kosovo and its recognition by a majority of EU member states, the party began to advocate opposition to Serbian EU accession until outstanding issues with the EU were resolved (as discussed in Chapter 3). In late 2011, the party went a step further by adopting the principle of political and military neutrality, and an outright cessation of further EU integration of Serbia as the core party policy. The question is therefore: what was the key factor that led to the change of its position on Serbian EU membership (while party ideology largely remained the same), and to what extent may this have been caused by stances on the EU expressed by its core voters? The chapter argues that the transformation of the party position was primarily ideologically motivated. Its Euroscepticism was the result of the proclamation of Kosovo's independence (*de facto* supported by the EU), to which the party responded ideologically and strongly opposed it. The core electorate's preferences about the EU (see Table 6.3) seem to not have any role in the formation of party stances on this issue.

The traditional supporters of this party were characterised by a pronounced religiosity, preference for state centralisation and low trust in other nations (Goati 2006). An important element of the profile of this party's supporters was also a hostile attitude towards the Hague Tribunal: 49% had negative views, while 9% expressed positive attitudes towards this institution, and 28% showed a willingness to surrender the indicted for war crimes (Goati 2006, p.31).<sup>22</sup> At a time when it was a member of the pro-European

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<sup>22</sup> At the same time, 78% of the voters of the Serbian Radical Party, 76% of the Serbian Socialist Party, 10% of the Democratic Party and 15% of G17 Plus expressed a negative stance on the Hague Tribunal (Goati 2006).

ruling coalition, the party core electorate expressed a very high level of support for Serbian EU membership, which in 2005 amounted to 87% (Cesid 2005). In addition, in a survey on the EU the majority of its electorate expressed a 'realistic attitude' (51%), while others were somewhat restrained, without much enthusiasm towards the EU (17%), but also without any Europhobia (Evropski forum 2005); this was fully in line with party policies at that time. In other words, this was essentially a pro-European, conservative and centre-right party that has always given priority to national issues. It thus supported Serbian EU membership as long as it was not in opposition to crucial national interests, as it perceived them.

The key changes that occurred at the beginning of 2008 were not motivated by core voter preferences (similar to the cases of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party). The decision to take a new stance on the EU was fundamentally the decision of the party leaders and was driven by the ideological belief that it was unacceptable to compromise on state sovereignty and integrity for the sake of 'eventual Serbian EU membership in the uncertain and rather distant future' as argued by the party's vice president Slobodan Samardžić (Interview 2011). This policy-seeking party, therefore, ignored impulses coming from its core electorate, which supported EU membership (79% in 2007, 72% in 2009), with the notable exception of January 2012, when 25% favoured accession (see Table 6.3). Even four years after the policy change, in September 2012, the majority of voters – precisely 49% (Cesid 2009) – were in favour of Serbia's EU accession. On the other side, as with the majority of other parties, the core electorate was divided and had inconclusive positions on the EU as such. The survey (Cesid 2008), conducted at the time the party declared its opposition to Serbian EU membership, clearly demonstrated this division. Almost the same percentage of voters expressed positive, negative and mixed attitudes towards the EU (30%, 30%, 40%), as presented in Table 6.5. The data indicate that the party core electorate did not have a definite position on this issue at the time of the dramatic events of 2008, but also that there was no prevailing opinion that Serbia should stop its EU accession and no pronounced Euroscepticism. Yet the party adopted opposition to Serbian EU membership as a firm and fundamental principle.

This shows that the party leadership was not motivated by the attitudes of their core voters. The decision to take a new position was primarily driven by principled, not strategic, reasons. This was further confirmed when party president Vojislav Koštunica resigned as a Prime Minister in the midst of the Kosovo crisis, and ultimately the party tested its new

policies with voters. It was, however, highly unsuccessful and the party won considerably fewer votes than in the previous elections. It is reasonable to assume that the party leadership had indications that such a development could be expected and that its electorate may not follow the party's new orientation, but they nevertheless decided to go to the polls with a pronounced Eurosceptic campaign. Furthermore, the party strengthened its scepticism towards the EU considerably over the years. It positioned itself as a major opponent of Serbian EU membership and set the principle of political neutrality as an absolute priority in its overarching policies. What could have been favourable to the party position was the sharp increase in public opposition to Serbian EU membership since 2008, from 12% to 29% (Table 6.1), but the party did not capitalise on these sentiments. In the 2012 election campaign, it further reinforced its opposition to the EU and attempted to present itself as an outlier among Serbian parties, offering an alternative to voters' dilemmas on the country's foreign policy orientation – but again was highly unsuccessful.

The Democratic Party of Serbia is therefore one more example of a Serbian party whose leadership decided to fundamentally change its policy towards the EU largely independently of core voters' preferences. However, its specific position is reflected in the fact that it was not a strategic decision that in the long run should have brought tangible political results (as was the case with the Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia), but rather the expression of profound disagreement with the EU and some of its members, as well as a protest against the policy of *'fait accompli'* regarding the status of Kosovo, even at the cost of losing power and the support of voters. The factors that have transformed the other two parties therefore had no effect on the Democratic Party of Serbia. It did not 'soften' its position as a result of the logic of 'coalition building', a strong intention to come to power or EU pressures 'to accept the reality and move forward'. On the contrary, the party became 'non-coalitionable', in the same way that this was the case with the Radicals and the Socialists until 2008; it remained a party not willing to change and adapt its policies to the 'new circumstances' or voters' preferences.

#### **6.4.4 Other political parties' attitudes towards the EU and their core constituencies**

A general mismatch between electorate and party preferences on the EU was also visible in the case of other parties. This was most evident in 2005, when 66% of voters of the Serbian Radical Party (Table 6.3) supported Serbian EU membership, although the party was traditionally and fundamentally hard Eurosceptic. The rise in support for EU

membership among voters may be explained by the moderated rhetoric of the then-party leadership, which did not openly and vocally object to Serbian EU membership. On the other side, in 2008/2009, when a significant 47% of voters were in favour of Serbian EU accession, the Radicals formulated the policy of ‘an absolute and unconditional opposition to Serbian EU integration’, as explained by the former party’s MP, Dejan Mirović (Interview, 2011). This party seems to confirm Mudde’s (2007, p.182) argument that ‘populist radical right parties’ do not appear to be particularly led by the views of their electorate in their stance towards the EU, and that there are significant differences between the European positions of these parties and their supporters. In other words, ideological and principled reasons predominantly shaped the party’s position on the EU, with its electorate largely Eurosceptic, but not as much as one would expect given the party’s tradition of strong anti-Europeanism and anti-Westernism.<sup>23</sup>

After 2008, however, this party had an incentive to maintain its hard Eurosceptic position, given a sharp rise in public Euroscepticism. Specifically, support for Serbia’s EU integration dropped to 41% of citizens in December 2011; this was the lowest level since 2002 (SEIO 2013). In an interview (2011), Mirović claimed that at least 30% of Serbian voters were absolutely against EU accession regardless of the EU’s involvement in Kosovo’s independence. He concluded that ‘the party was practical, since that was a huge source of votes, which would only grow over time, given that people cannot be deceived by the EU and pro-European Serbian governments all the time’. The party therefore had pragmatic and strategic incentives to maintain its hard Eurosceptic stance. Nevertheless, the downward trend in support for Serbian EU accession could be seen as reinforcement, rather than a cause of party attitudes, given that it had essentially maintained such a policy even when the EU was more popular with Serbian voters.

Finally, Tables 6.3 and 6.5 point to only two Serbian parties whose voters had consistent and articulated stances on this issue. These were the (most Euroenthusiastic) Democratic Party and the Liberal Democratic Party. Their electorates consistently expressed pro-European sentiments, which were in line with the parties’ positions. However, whether the drivers of the continuity in these parties’ stances on the EU were voters’ preferences or not was more difficult to assess. It appears that these were mostly ideologically Euroenthusiastic parties (as discussed in Chapter 3) that did not accommodate the rising

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<sup>23</sup> The fringe party Dveri, which until 2011 was the leading Eurosceptic protest movement, had the most Eurosceptic electorate, since 81% of its voters opposed Serbian EU accession (BCBP, 2012).

public Euroscepticism after 2008, while core voter positions may have just reinforced their viewpoints and policies on Europe.

#### **6.4.5 Croatian political parties' attitudes towards the EU and their core constituencies**

Data on attitudes of core voters of the Croatian parliamentary parties towards the country's EU accession are presented in Table 6.6 and Figure 6.2. Unlike Serbian data, the available data on Croatian voters are related to a relatively short period, from 2008 to 2012. There was no change in the underlying attitudes of these parties towards the EU in this period (with the partial exception of the Croatian Party of Rights) that may be interpreted to be, to some extent, a result of their core voters' stances on this issue. For a complete analysis of Croatian parties, it would be essential to collect and analyse data on the stances of the electorate of parties that shifted attitudes towards the EU at a time when the transformation occurred (for instance, the Croatian Democratic Union and its voters in the early 2000s). However, the unavailability or short time-series of available data prevents a more detailed analysis of individual party attitudes towards the EU in this country. Therefore, it is difficult to assess to what extent these parties were guided by the interests of their core voters when they formulated policies on Europe.

Table 6.6: Attitudes of Croatian parties' voters towards Croatian EU membership

Sources: Puls (2008, 2009), Jutarnji list (2011), Index (2011), T-Portal (2011), Ipsos Puls (2011), Ipsos (2012)

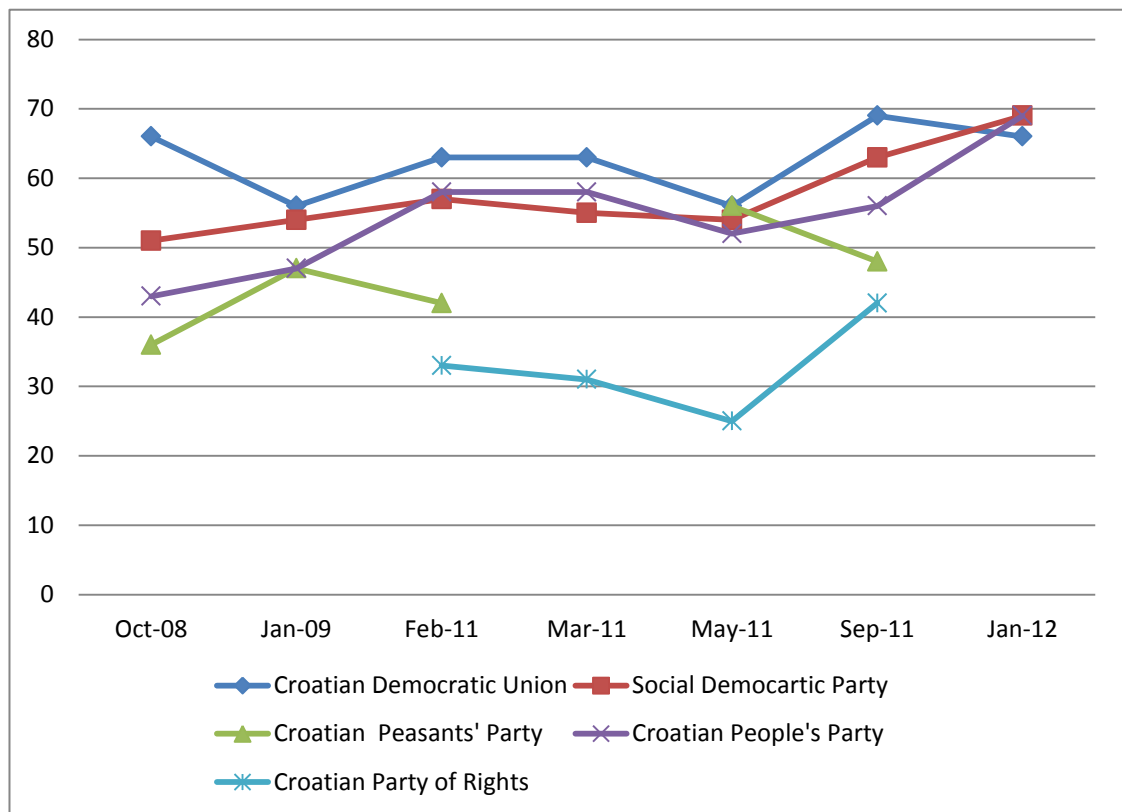
	Croatian Democratic Union	Social Democratic Party	Croatian Peasants' Party	Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats	Croatian Party of Rights
	In favour Against No stance	In favour Against No stance	In favour Against No stance	In favour Against No stance	In favour Against No stance
October 2008	66% 28% 7%	51% 42% 6%	36% 53% 11%	43% 46% 10%	- - -
January 2009	56% 35% 10%	54% 40% 6%	47% 49% 4%	47% 49% 4%	- - -
February 2011	63% - -	57% - -	42% - -	58% - -	33% - -
March 2011	63% - -	55% - -	- - -	58% - -	31% - -
May 2011	56% - -	54% - -	56% 44% -	52% - -	25% - -
September 2011	69% 25% 8%	63% 33% 4%	48% 51% 1%	56% 39% 5%	42% 54% 4%
January 2012	66% 29% 6%	69% 27% 4% <sup>24</sup>	- - -	69% 27% 4%	- - -

<sup>24</sup> Voters of 'the Kukuriku Coalition' (Social Democratic Party, Croatian Peasants Party, Croatian Pensioners' Party and Istrian Democratic Assembly).



Nevertheless, it is possible to arrive at some conclusions. First, the majority of parties had a similar and almost uniform percentage of voters who were in favour or against Croatia's EU membership, with voters following the trend best visible in Figure 6.2. In addition, the majority of voters of Croatian parties consistently supported the country's EU accession, which may be a reflection of the fact that the relevant parties reached a national consensus on joining the EU in early 2000. The only notable exception was the Croatian Party of Rights since only about a third of its voters endorsed Croatia's accession (Jutarnji List 2011) and to some extent the Croatian Peasants Party (Ipsos Puls 2011).

Figure 6.2: Support for Croatian EU membership by party electorates (based on data in Table 6.6)



The electorate of the Croatian Democratic Union, out of all parties, was consistently the strongest supporter of Croatian EU membership. Given the party ideology and political legacy, it may seem to be a paradox that more voters of this party endorsed EU accession than the electorate of the ideologically pro-European Social Democratic Party and Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats. The latter party was a particularly interesting case given that this fundamentally Euroenthusiastic, liberal party had a high percentage of core voters

who opposed Croatia's EU membership – 49% in early 2009 (Puls 2009). This may be primarily attributed to the fact that the Croatian Democratic Union was a ruling party that was negotiating terms for Croatian EU accession, and largely monopolised this process, as argued by the international secretary of the Social Democratic Party, Karolina Leaković (Interview 2011). This consequently gave rise to dissatisfaction among the essentially pro-EU voters of opposition parties that were not directly involved in the EU accession process. On the other side, the Croatian Democratic Union portrayed the completion of accession negotiations as the party's most important and historic achievement, although many of the party's members and voters were prone to nationally oriented Euroscepticism. Such sentiments were not visible in Table 6.6, although interviews with senior party officials and country experts (Leaković, 2011; Raos, 2011; Pejčinović Burić, 2011) confirmed the presence of relatively strong Euroscepticism within the party's voters. The fact that ideologically pro-EU opposition parties had core voters that were more Eurosceptic compared to the voters of the then-ruling Croatian Democratic Union may also be due to the nature of these parties' electorates. As Igor Kolman, the spokesman of the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats (Interview 2011), explained, 'the Croatian Democratic Union had a very disciplined electorate that blindly followed its leadership, while the voters of the Croatian Peoples' Party-Liberal Democrats by nature question everything'.

What is important to notice is that ideologically pro-EU parties did not compromise their pro-European orientation; this remained the key feature of their policies despite occasionally Eurosceptic electoral impulses, which were more a reflection of domestic party competition than of real concerns about Croatian EU membership. Finally, the number of undecided voters was lower than in Serbia. This suggests that voters were more informed and thus expressed more consistent and articulate stances on this issue. Parties, consequently, may have found it more difficult to ignore voters' preferences, compared to their Serbian counterparts. However, given the available data and the trend of voters' support and opposition to Croatian EU membership, it was difficult to assess the extent to which parties were motivated by electorates' preferences on this issue.

## **6.5 Party attitudes towards the EU and relations with socio-economic groups**

The following section briefly looks at the linkages between socio-economic groups and parties; that is, the potential effect of the preferences of socio-economic groups on party

positions on Europe. It examines the financial and lobby groups ('tycoons' and 'oligarchs'), trade unions, non-governmental organisations and national churches in both countries.

The murky impact of financial lobbies and big businesses on party politics, primarily through financing political parties, particularly in Serbia, has been widely recognised among scholars and country specialists interviewed (Bakić, Interview 2011; Cvijanović, Interview 2011; Vuletić, Interview 2011). Krstić (2012) argued that there was a so-called 'tycoonisation of Serbian politics' where 'political actors are just pawns of domestic and foreign tycoons', adding that financial lobbies have had a final say when governments have been formed. Bakić (2013) also made the case that oligarchs have close links with the leaderships of political parties and the fact that the anti-monopolies act was only passed in 2008 was the best illustration of this linkage. Vesna Pešić (2007, p.6), one of the former leaders of the Serbian opposition in the 1990s and a former MP of the Liberal Democratic Party, further specified that 'the 10-15 richest tycoons of the country finance all the relevant parties', thereby becoming part of the political system. She argued that tycoons have become part of the system by buying political influence to ensure their monopolies and get favourable laws and various privileges. Pešić (Interview 2011) specifically noted that there was a mutual dependence between the political and business elite, since the tycoons helped sustain parties' political existence by financing them. In return, Pešić argued, the ruling parties protect economic markets, fix tenders and auctions, and pass favourable legislation for the tycoons.

While in power, politicians rarely admitted these links. The only exception was the former deputy vice president of the Serbian Radical Party, Tomislav Nikolić, who confirmed that this party was financed by the two allegedly most influential tycoons – Mirolsav Mišković and Miln Beko (Transparentnost 2008) – while the former leader of the Democratic Party, Boris Tadić, confessed that his party 'was financed by the tycoons, but the truth is that I put an end to that practice. That resulted in a relation that they want to see my back' (Blic 2012). Beko (Politika 2013) himself admitted to financing political parties, but he stopped doing it 'since it is the worst possible investment, because the politicians in Serbia do not hold their promises'.

It was more difficult to assess the extent to which financial lobbies specifically impacted party stances on the EU and their interests in this respect. Orlović (2008a), for example, argued that tycoons and oligarchs were among the most vigorous opponents of Serbian EU

integration. He noted that Europeanisation was not in their interest and that they tried to obstruct it, as it creates a system where 'the rules of the game are respected'. Political analyst Cvijanović (Interview 2011) hypothesised that financial lobbies had different interests at different stages of EU accession. Initially, at a time when they created monopolies, they were opponents of the EU memberships of their countries, since 'European consolidation' and the creation of systems with firm rules was not in their economic interests. As this process advanced, though, they became proponents of joining the EU, given that their positions would be strengthened and the initial gaining of capital legitimised, while further economic expansion required the political stability and legal predictability that EU membership could bring. Cvijanović argued that they became proponents of EU integration when they started thinking about cheap credit and selling their companies, and concluded that the pure and calculated economic interest is essentially their stance on the EU.

Given the importance of financial lobbies' role in party politics, which was confirmed by all country experts interviewed (Bakić, Interview 2011; Pešić, Interview 2011; Vuletić, Interview 2011), it is highly likely that they had some impact on party policies on the EU. In addition, EU integration had a direct tangible impact on their economic interests, which made them rather sensitive to changes brought about by this process. There was also some evidence that big companies and tycoons initially financed hard Eurosceptic parties in Serbia, such as the Serbian Radical Party, and later a pro-European Democratic Party. However, given the sensitive nature of this issue and the limited available data, it was difficult to directly trace back these parties' position on Europe to any strong influence of organised economic interest. Further research to substantiate these claims is needed.

On the other hand, there is no evidence that other social-economic groups had any significant effect on party responses to Europe. Stojiljković (2008, p. 387) specified that Serbian parties had only occasional and informal contacts with trade unions, NGOs and social movements, while 87% of NGO activists deemed that the influence of NGOs on government policy was too small. As a result, a number of both pro-EU and Eurosceptic organisations and movements opted to transform into political parties (G17 Plus, Resistance, Dveri). This in turn points to the lack of linkages between parties and NGOs, and the limited opportunities for non-party actors in these countries to exercise any significant influence over public policies, including those related to the EU.

Trade unions were weak organisations across both countries and their relations with political parties, including left-wing parties, were sporadic. The Socialist Party of Serbia claimed to be the closest to trade unions. Its vice president, Dijana Vukomanović (Interview 2011), argued in an interview that ‘the party is committed to social partnership with trade unions, based on the Austrian-German model’. However, she recognised that ‘the classical, monolith working class does not exist anymore’. She specified that the party struggled to interpret the authentic socio-economic problems and interests of the workers. As a consequence, given the lack of organised workers’ interests and articulated positions on European integration, parties were not responsive to their influences, including those with a leftist ideology. Similarly, conservative and Christian-democratic parties were largely insulated from the influence of national churches regarding this issue. Significant elements within both Orthodox and Catholic churches expressed vocal Eurosceptic sentiments in these countries, motivated by concerns for the national identities and traditional values that may be endangered by EU accession (Perica 2006). However, based largely on the interviews, the study did not find evidence that churches exerted any significant impact on political parties. Even parties based on Christian values, with strong connections to clergy (the Croatian Democratic Union and the Democratic Party of Serbia) appear to have formed stances irrespective of this factor. Other parties, however, openly opposed the clergy’s opposition to the EU membership of their countries (for example, the Socialist Party of Serbia and Liberal Democratic Party). The overall impact of national churches appeared to have been direct and not mediated through political parties, although churches did not manage to crucially shape the debate on the EU in these societies.

## 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter examined the positions of Serbian and Croatian parties on the EU in relation to public and core voters’ opinions on the EU as well as the stances of most important socio-economic groups on this issue. It specifically sought to assess the effects of these three factors on party responses to Europe and whether parties have been cued by them when adopting and shifting policies on this issue. The chapter found that, in general, parties tended to ignore and did not respond to public and voter preferences on this issue. In other words, there was no significant bottom-up impact on party positions on the EU. This was due to the nature of the attitudes towards the EU that were expressed by the public and core voters. Their stances were mostly volatile, inconsistent and unarticulated (as presented in Tables 6.1-6.6), which left considerable space for parties to manoeuvre on

this issue. However, there are some indications that parties were affected by the interests of financial and lobby groups when determining and shifting positions on the EU.

The study specifically did not find evidence to support H4a hypothesis that *the more general public opinion is Eurosceptic, the more likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. This is contrary to the expectation from the Europeanisation literature (Vachudova 2006; Konitzer 2011), which argued for the crucial impact of public opinion on parties' responses to Europe. The chapter found a significant mismatch between the position of relevant parties and public opinion on the EU in Serbia and Croatia. Specifically, Eurosceptic parties used to get more than a third of the votes in Serbian elections, while only a small fraction of the public opposed EU membership (Table 6.1). On the other side, growing popular Euroscepticism since 2008 was not reflected in the electoral results of Eurosceptic parties, which experienced a sharp decline in electoral support. Similarly, the significant Euroscepticism of the Croatian public, which steadily grew in the early 2000s, was not politically articulated and represented (Table 6.2). This may be attributed to the fact that voters in general did not recognise party stances on the EU as a crucial segment of their overall policies. Consequently, they did not vote for these parties because of their stances on the EU, but due to other reasons. This was partly the result of deliberate party strategies to downplay Euroscepticism and moderate rhetoric, most notably seen in the case of the Serbian Radical Party in the mid-2000s, when it did not vocally reject Serbian EU membership and thus attracted considerable swathes of essentially pro-European electorate. In addition, EU membership was, crucially, an issue of low salience for the general public in Serbia (Bogosavljević 2007; FBD 2013).

On the other side, the chapter found empirical evidence in the case of the parties analysed to refute H4b that *the more parties' electoral constituencies are Eurosceptic, the more likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. Remarkably, it demonstrated a striking mismatch between the position of parties that shifted stances on the EU and their electoral constituencies, most visible in the cases of the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Democratic Party of Serbia. These parties changed stances regardless of the views of their core voters, who expressed opposing positions even years after they undertook a significant reorientation (Tables 6.3 and 6.5). The chapter argues that this was due to the fact that party leaders did not face strong coherent reactions from voters on this issue, given that the core voters of the majority of parties had rather ambivalent attitudes towards the EU. In other words, the EU was generally a 'difficult issue' for voters of

Serbian parties, who had ‘mixed’ views about the EU and problems expressing their definite and firm positions, most visible in the percentage of neutral and non-stances on the EU in Table 6.5. This in turn gave political parties considerable space to manoeuvre on this issue. In other words, it appears that core voters of the majority of Serbian parties did not know what to think about the EU due to both the contradictory relations with the EU and the outstanding identity issues that polarised this society; this allowed parties to easily change stances and policies on this issue.

The thesis, however, also identified that parties that maintained consistent positions had core voters that overwhelmingly expressed opinions mostly in line with those of parties themselves (the Democratic Party, Liberal Democratic Party and Serbian Radical Party). Nevertheless, it was difficult to assess the significance of this relation, since this ‘continuity’ may have also been a consequence of their ideological convictions in the EU or a combination of other explanatory factors examined – and as such formed irrespective of core voter’s considerations. The chapter, in summary, largely confirmed that party elites in these countries did not place a high value on the preferences of their electoral constituencies or the general public. As Stojiljković (2008, p.96) pointed out, the electoral bases of Serbian parties have a low motivation and potential, and their influence is limited and devoid of continuity. As a result, occasional impulses coming from the party base were rather weak and diffuse, while party leaders tended to formulate key party policies driven by strategic and pragmatic motivations.

With respect to socio-economic groups, the thesis partially confirmed H4c hypothesis that *the more socio-economic groups are Eurosceptic, the more likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. It found that political parties, irrespective of their intrinsic characteristic – that is, whether they were more ideologically or strategically motivated – were prone to be impacted by financial and lobby groups, while other organised interests exerted rather limited or no influence. Specifically, the data obtained through the interviews suggested that the impact of trade unions, non-governmental organisations and national churches on party attitudes towards the EU was limited. Trade unions were generally very weak organisations across both countries and consequently appeared not to have any effect on parties, including those that claim to express a social democratic ideology. Similarly, conservative and Christian-democratic parties were largely insulated from the influence of Orthodox and Catholic churches, which seemed to have rather direct mechanisms of expressing their (often Eurosceptic) stances on the EU. Non-governmental organisations

with pro-EU platforms, once crucial in ousting the Milošević's regime in Serbia, lost their importance and potential to impact party stances over time, unless they transformed into political parties (G17 Plus, Resistance). Similarly, a number of strongly Eurosceptic nationalist organisations across both countries appeared to not have influence on mainstream parties but also opted for the transformation into political parties (Dveri).

On the other hand, the study found that the impact of tycoons, and financial and lobby groups on political parties can be regarded as important, particularly in Serbia, given the 'tycoonisation of its politics' (Krstić 2012). Data considered here indicated that they exerted considerable influence through financing political parties, which was confirmed by all country experts interviewed. This may be attributed to the fact that EU accession had a direct tangible impact on their economic interests, which made them rather sensitive to changes brought about by this process. However, given the delicate nature of this issue and the limited available data, it was difficult to directly trace parties' position on Europe to the apparently strong influence of organised economic interests; further research to substantiate these claims is needed.



## Chapter 7: Party attitudes towards the EU and transnational and bilateral party linkages

*We got him to flip over and join the pro-Europeans. We didn't pay him off, we just persuaded him. What he really wanted was international legitimacy. So we got [José Luis Rodríguez] Zapatero, the Spanish prime minister at the time, and George Papandreou, the future Greek prime minister, who ran Socialist International at the time, to invite Dačić to visit them abroad, where they wine and dined him. They told him they would let him in [to the Socialist International] if he joined the pro-European forces, and he did'. (Cameron Munter, former US ambassador to Serbia talking about Iвица Dačić, the leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia; see KraleV 2012)*

This chapter examines the final factors that may affect party positioning on European integration: transnational and bilateral party linkages. These linkages are an explanatory variable that has rarely been dealt with systematically in the existing comparative literature. However, as the introductory quote suggests, this may have been an important driver of party changes in the milieu of the unsettled party systems of the Western Balkan countries, where some political actors tended to be susceptible to foreign influences. This chapter therefore seeks to examine how and to what extent party linkages with (i) European transnational party federations, (ii) foreign national parties, (iii) EU institutions and (iv) foreign countries represented by their ambassadors affected the attitudes of Serbian and Croatian parties towards the EU since 2000. The chapter aims to examine the nature of these linkages in a systematic manner by employing the concept of direct and indirect transnational impact, which synthesises some of the key arguments from the comparative literature.

The chapter argues that transnational and bilateral party linkages generally were not a crucial driving force behind party stances on the substance of the European integration in Serbia and Croatia. Given that the majority of parties adopted ideologically driven stances on Europe (as discussed in Chapter 3), they were not receptive to external influences. Membership in European transnational party federations was a consequence rather than a cause of the positions expressed by Eurosensuasiastic parties; hard Eurosceptic parties did not show any intention to join them and compromise their mostly ideologically motivated positions. However, it is also argued that European transnational party federations had a considerable indirect impact on parties that were at an early stage of ideological transformation toward becoming credible mainstream and pro-European parties, after a long legacy of Eurosceptic and nationalist politics. These parties (the Croatian Democratic

Union, Serbian Progressive Party and Socialist Party of Serbia) strove to obtain European legitimacy by becoming a member of one of the European transnational party federations and were, consequently, more willing to harmonise their positions with (potential) European partners. Finally, the chapter identifies an important role for EU institutions, and particularly foreign ambassadors, but again mostly in the case of strategically driven parties prone to foreign influences. These ‘external veto players’ exerted an influence on party EU stances in the context of weak institutions, fragmented party systems and political elites that generally did not pursue principled politics based on a clear set of fundamental values.

The chapter analyses party bilateral linkages alongside transnational linkages to European transnational parties, given the difficulties in separating their impacts on party responses to Europe. In other words, Serbian and Croatian parties co-operated on a bilateral basis with foreign parties that were members of the transnational parties they had joined or aimed to do so. The best example of this is the Croatian Democratic Union, whose close relations with both the European People’s Party and individual members of this European transnational party significantly contributed to its pro-European reorientation. There are, however, cases where bilateral cooperation was the most important form of international party linkage. This was the case with hard Eurosceptic parties that did not show any interest in international affiliations (the Serbian Radical Party), or parties that had difficulties in securing international affiliations (the Serbian Progressive Party). The thesis therefore examines these parties’ bilateral linkages in greater detail.

This study draws on a series of interviews with Serbian and Croatian politicians, as well as MEPs and officials of three leading European transnational party federations: the European People’s Party (EPP), the Party of European Socialists (PES), and the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR).<sup>25</sup> It is also based on the content analysis of parties’ programmatic documents and public statements of both Serbian/Croatian and European politicians. The chapter is divided as follows: it first reviews the comparative literature on party responses to Europe in relation to their bilateral and transnational linkages. The second section deals with conceptual issues and proposes a conceptual framework. The third section examines the patterns of transnational and bilateral links of Serbian and Croatian parties in relation to their stances towards the EU. The chapter then looks at party relations with EU institutions and foreign ambassadors, while the concluding

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<sup>25</sup> The European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party changed its name to the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE Party) in November 2012.

section summarises the key findings and draws implications from the Serbian and Croatian cases.

### **7.1 Party attitudes towards the EU and their transnational and bilateral linkages in the comparative literature**

The following section discusses arguments derived from the comparative literature on parties' stances on the EU in relation to their transnational and bilateral linkages. These arguments come from two broad research areas (see Chapter 1). The first school sought to examine the impact of the EU on political parties, although few scholars from this tradition specifically looked at European transnational party federations as a mode of EU influence. The second school was primarily interested in what shaped party attitudes towards the EU, particularly Eurosceptic ones, and looked at a number of possible explanatory factors, with party bilateral and transnational relations rarely being the focus of their attention. In addition, both camps largely ignored the role of ambassadors and foreign governments as potential drivers of party responses to Europe, while the role of EU institutions was addressed by the former camp.

Within the first school interested in how the EU impacts party systems and political parties, there have been broadly two groups of authors. The first group sought to examine the specific impact of the EU on parties mostly in the context of accession conditions imposed on candidate states, and may be thus termed the EU conditionality literature. The second group was, however, concerned with the more general impact of the EU on party politics in member and candidate countries. The key assumption of the EU conditionality camp is that the external force of the EU is the single most important factor that induces significant changes in political parties in EU candidate and member countries. As Vachudova (2008, p.862) specified, 'in almost all cases, major political parties respond to EU leverage by adopting agendas that are consistent with EU requirements in the run-up to negotiations for membership'. Vachudova thus argued that parties in EU candidate states follow a predictable evolution over time and become pro-European, which is caused by participation in the pre-accession process. Specifically, political elites transform and adopt more pro-EU positions as a result of either the strict conditionality and tangible material incentives provided by the EU, or as a consequence the EU's socialisation and persuasion that gradually changes the perception of elites' identities and interests. Konitzer (2011) similarly argued that the pressure of external veto actors, primarily the EU, creates intra-party splits between 'extroverts' and 'introverts'. While the former seek to improve their

parties' electoral prospects by transforming and becoming more pro-European, the latter seek to maintain their parties' Euroscepticism. Konitzer thus posited that parties transform towards being pro-European if EU-induced 'extroverts' prevail. In other words, these authors argued the EU exerts a significant impact on party stances and policies, and can ultimately fundamentally alter their stances on the EU.

Scholars from the second group, focused on the general EU impact on party politics, analysed different mechanism of the EU's impact, including transnational parties as a channel of EU influence. In general, they found some evidence of the EU's impact which, however, has been rather limited. Ladrech (2002), in his pioneering article on the Europeanisation of political parties, proposed an analytical framework containing five areas to be analysed in order to assess the extent of the EU's influence.<sup>26</sup> He identified that 'the relations beyond the national party system', i.e., parties' transnational linkages, were an important factor. Ladrech (2002, p.399) specifically posited that party transnational cooperation may lead 'to new organizational and programmatic activities and innovation'. However, in his later article, Ladrech (2008) argued that the European transnational party federations are in general marginal to the pursuit of national party goals and that their role may be more significant only in the lowering of transaction costs for party elites to gain knowledge and insight into European level decision-making.

Similarly, Haughton (2009) looked at the impact of links with European transnational party federations or the European Parliament's groupings as one of the five benchmarks for measuring the EU's overall influence on parties in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>27</sup> Haughton sought to establish whether there was policy-borrowing from European transnational party federations – that is, whether parties in Central and Eastern Europe referred in their programmatic documents to European transnational party federations. He found that there was little evidence of transnational parties having an impact on national parties in Central and Eastern Europe. Haughton did not identify any fundamental programmatic changes induced by European transnational party federations, which were deemed important for national parties only as 'the badge of approval' and the source of increased political stature. Haughton (2009, p.417) thus concluded that there was 'a low to medium impact of

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<sup>26</sup> The five proposed areas were: 1. Policy/programmatic content, 2. Organisation, 3. Patterns of party competition, 4. Party-government relations, and 5. Relations beyond the national party system.

<sup>27</sup> The proposed benchmarks included: 1. Role of European policy specialists within party decision-making, 2. Impact on the distribution of power within parties, 3. Use of the European issue in inter-party competition, 4. Prominence of European issues in party programmes, and 5. Impact of links with European party federations or the European Parliament's groupings.

European transnational parties on parties in Central and Eastern Europe after their EU accession', given 'very little evidence of any borrowing, or evidence of policy borrowing only on explicitly European issues'.

Enyedi and Lewis (2006) focused on four areas<sup>28</sup> in order to examine the impact of the EU on party politics in Central and Eastern Europe, including the role of European transnational party federations in the ideological transformation of national parties. Unlike Haughton, these authors found evidence of the impact of European party federations. They claimed that these transnational party federations can exert a large impact on the political orientation of Central and Eastern European parties, which increasingly orient themselves towards one of the standard European families. However, Enyedi and Lewis (2006, p.236) did not find evidence of deeper ideological or behavioural change, although there is 'a considerable degree of genuine ideological borrowing going on', seen, for example, in the case of former communist parties absorbing the ideology of the social democratic Third Way or European radical left. They therefore argued that the Socialist parties in Central and Eastern Europe are the most 'standardised' or 'Europeanised' in organisational and ideological terms. A similar analysis was conducted by a number of other authors dealing with different national party systems (Batory 2009; Haughton and Rybář 2009), and as a rule they arrived at the conclusion that there is some, although very limited, influence of the EU, including European transnational party federations, on national parties' programmatic documents and behaviour.

Furthermore, a number of authors explicitly examined the effects of parties' transnational cooperation on their responses to Europe, which is the aim of this chapter. Most of them found some, although limited, evidence for the impact of European transnational parties. Holmes and Lightfoot (2011) used Ladrech's model and explicitly looked at the policies towards the EU of social democratic parties in Central and Eastern Europe, and whether they were shaped by the Party of European Socialists. Holmes and Lightfoot (2011, p.50) did identify 'the attempts [of the Party of European Socialists] to impact the policy of parties in Central and Eastern Europe in relation to attitudes towards the EU'. They also noted that this was not problematic for the Party of European Socialists because the majority of social democratic parties were relatively Euroenthusiastic. As a result, this federation did not have to intervene and impact the national party's attitudes towards the

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<sup>28</sup> The proposed areas were: 1. Changes in the fundamental characteristics of the party systems, 2. The role of European party federations in the ideological transformation of parties, 3. The place of Euroscepticism in electoral competition, 4. The degree to which EU-related attitudes have received effective representation.

EU to a great degree. However, Holmes and Lightfoot (2011, p.52) also argued that social democratic parties largely perceived EU membership instrumentally, as a tool and ‘a means to an end’, without sharing a deeper and common understanding of the EU. Furthermore, although not suggesting a dramatic rise in Euroscepticism, they noticed a decline of enthusiasm for the integration process among some member-parties of the Party of European Socialists in Central and Eastern Europe. Holmes and Lightfoot (2011, p.53) attributed this development to the fact that after joining the EU and being freed from the constraints of conditionality, some parties ‘have reverted to policies that they see best suiting national electoral circumstances’. These authors concluded that the role of the Party of European Socialists in Central and Eastern Europe has been superficial, since it has not contributed to deep programmatic or any other changes. However, they also pointed out that membership in the Party of European Socialists is still an attractive lure for social democratic parties in non-EU states, such as the Democratic Party in Serbia and the Social Democratic Party in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Szczerbiak and Bil (2009) also employed the same model in analysing the EU’s impact on Polish political parties. One of the impact areas they examined is the relation between Polish and European transnational party federations, and they found this has not been significant for most of the Polish parties. More importantly, they examined Polish parties’ stances on Europe to note any EU impact. Szczerbiak and Bil (2009, p.447) argued that there is no obvious linear relationship between party positions on European integration and the extent to which the EU impinged upon a party, or the nature of that impact. They therefore concluded that the transnational party linkages have not been a significant driver of Polish parties’ attitudes to the EU. Conversely, Dakowska (2002) examined the way in which European transnational party federations affect the identity and activities of political elites from the former candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe. She argued that this was an important channel of socialisation of political elites, one that critically shaped their perceptions and political decisions. Therefore, Dakowska (2002, p.275) argued that an essential function of transnational party cooperation has been ‘to socialise important anti-European parties’ in order to elaborate a common programme on the general orientation of European integration. Additionally, she stressed that those parties in Central and Eastern Europe with a strong commitment to European integration and federalism have literally been ‘pursued’ by the European party federations.

On the other hand, there are few pieces of literature on party transnational and bilateral relations from authors investigating factors that shape party attitudes towards the EU. These authors, although rarely focused on party bilateral and transnational relations, found some evidence for the impact of transnational parties. Batory (2008a p.24), for example, argued that links with sister parties and European transnational party federations can reasonably be expected to have an impact on party policies, although this can be difficult to determine. In particular, she found it difficult to assess the nature of this relationship and which causal mechanism was at play. In other words, national parties may support EU integration as a result of transnational influence – that is, a diffusion of a particular stance of transnational parties – but they also may be susceptible to European influences exactly because of their pro-European positions. Batory (2008a, p.24) thus concluded that transnational party affiliations ‘had relatively little independent impact on Hungarian parties’ attitudes to the EU’, but also that they had a bearing on the parties’ ideological profiles. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a, p.14) pointed out that transnational party cooperation is potentially an important causal factor that is ‘often overlooked or neglected in accounts that focus on domestic drivers of politics’. Mikkel and Kasekamp (2008, p.306) also argued that transnational party links and membership to international organisations may have a significant impact on the patterns and levels of Euroscepticism in Estonia, while Henderson (2008, p.117) noted that Eurosceptic parties tend to belong to centre-right transnational European party organisations, most notably the European Democratic Union and the European People’s Party.

Pridham (2002, p.29) made the strongest case for the importance of party transnational relations, since he argued that ‘there is a quasi-organic link between transnational affiliation and concern over on the one hand, and general approach to European integration on the other’. Specifically, Pridham (2008) identified the three conditions placed by transnational party organisations on parties interested in membership: ideological compatibility, democratic conditionality, and pro-EU commitment. Pridham (2008, p.100) specified that conditionality over European integration is routine and has existed since the early days of transnational party cooperation; it had, along with other conditions, ‘a powerful influence and served to produce formal but also real changes in party positions and behaviour, including by Eurosceptic parties’. Consequently, he identified a clear link between Eurosceptic parties’ attitudes to the EU and their links with European transnational party federations by claiming that these external pressures reduce or ‘soften’ stances of Eurosceptic parties towards the EU in Central and Eastern European states. However,

Pridham (2002) also pointed out that transnational parties had a direct influence on party elites, while its wider influence on party development was more indirect. Similarly, Haughton and Fisher (2008, p.437) found that the desire for international respectability of the Croatian Democratic Union and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia led these former ruling parties with strong national appeals to rebrand themselves as mainstream European centre-right parties. Haughton and Fisher thus concluded that international organisations and party groupings can play a transformative role in party politics, providing incentives for change when dominant parties lose power.

Finally, scholars dealing with Western Balkan party politics rarely examined the linkages between these parties and European transnational party federations. Orlović (2008b, p.212), for example, argued that ‘membership of European transnational party federations can represent a crucial mechanism of programme and value standardization of Serbian parties’. Orlović (2008b, p.221) posited that there was evidence of EU impact after Serbian parties joined European transnational party federations, particularly in the adaptation of their programmes and organization, as well as in incorporating European issues in electoral campaigns. In an interview, Orlović (Interview, 2011) explained that the gradual ideological transformation of the Democratic Party in Serbia towards social-democracy took place under the influence of the Party of European Socialists. He also argued that relations with European transnational party federations act as a signal of the recognition of political forces that share European values and beliefs. Fink Hafner (2008) examined the response of national party systems in Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro to the EU and hypothesised that one of the explanatory variables is ‘the European socialization of national party elites’ – that is, the links of national party elites with European party federations. Unlike Orlović, Fink Hafner (2008, p.178) argued that ‘the impact of Europarties on Serbian parties should not be overestimated, especially not in relation to domestic factors’. The lack of this impact, she claimed, is primarily a consequence of the weak and quite recent start of the European socialisation of the Serbian party elite that has been occurring through links with European transnational party federations. Haughton and Fisher (2008, p.24) similarly argued, after investigating the link between the Croatian Democratic Union and the European People’s Party, that it would be inaccurate to see the European People’s Party as the only driver of change for this party in the early 2000s. They pointed out that membership in the European People’s Party was a reinforcement factor that helped this party to justify its modernisation.



A review of the existing literature points to significant differences between scholars on how and to what extent transnational and bilateral party linkages impact their stances on the EU. On the one hand, within the EU conditionality literature, scholars emphasised the transformative power of the EU (although not specifically European party federations) as the external veto actor and its significant effect on political parties (Vachudova 2008; Konitzer 2011). Other authors found some evidence for the limited impact of the EU, and more specifically European transnational party federations, on national political parties (Haughton 2009; Szczerbiak and Bil 2009; Holmes and Lightfoot 2011). On the other hand, literature dealing with the drivers of party attitudes towards the EU also found some evidence for this influence, which appears not to have been crucial (Batory 2008a; Haughton and Fisher 2008). Pridham (2002; 2008), however, argued for the strong impact of European transnational party federations on national parties' responses to European integration. Drawing on these debates in the comparative literature, this chapter aims to test the following hypotheses in the context of Serbian and Croatian party politics:

H5a: The stronger that parties' linkages are with European transnational party federations and national parties from EU member states, the less likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes;

H5b: The stronger that parties' linkages are with EU institutions and foreign governments, the less likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes.

The chapter's findings provide support for those authors that argued for the relative, but not crucial, importance of parties' transnational links for their responses to Europe (Enyedi and Lewis 2006; Batory 2008a; Haughton and Fisher 2008; Szczerbiak and Bil 2009). In other words, this chapter did not find evidence that Serbian and Croatian parties were generally susceptible to the influences of European transnational parties regarding their stances and policies on the EU. These linkages, therefore, appear to have been of rather secondary importance to the majority of parties given their ideologically driven stances on the EU (see Chapter 3). However, this was indeed an important catalyst for change or a reinforcing factor for a specific group of formerly Eurosceptic parties that did adopt strategically driven positions on Europe.

## 7.2 Conceptual framework

The general influence of the EU on political parties is a complex phenomenon that poses a challenge for researchers attempting to analyse it. Haughton (2009) argued that there are significant difficulties in analytically separating out the impact of Europe from national level explanatory factors and that any attempt to assess the impact of the EU raises the problem of causality. Ladrech (2002) also found it particularly difficult to trace changes back to an EU source. The focus of this analysis is the impact of European parties on national parties' stances on the EU; however, this faces the same challenges, particularly given that European transnational party federations do not possess many easily identifiable instruments to influence national parties. The key questions that arise in the context of this analysis are: how does one assess the nature of the relationship between a party's stance on the EU and the potential effect of European transnational party federations? How to measure this influence, and what indicators to use? And what type of party adaptations need to be observed? The same questions can be raised for the analysis of the effect of parties' bilateral relations, EU institutions and ambassadors.

In order to answer these questions and to examine the link between Serbian and Croatian parties' transnational relations and their attitudes towards the EU in a more systematic manner, this chapter employs the concept of direct and indirect impacts. This concept has been well recognised in the comparative literature that deals with both the Europeanisation of political parties and the factors that shape party attitudes on Europe, since a number of authors differentiated between these two types of EU influence. Mair's (2000) influential study used the framework of direct and indirect impacts of European integration on the national party systems (not the individual political parties) of the EU member states. He conceptualised the direct impact as EU influence on the format and mechanics of party systems. The former refers to a number of parties and the emergence of new parties as a consequence of EU impact, while the latter is related to parties' interaction with one another on a pro- vs. anti-European integration dimension. Similarly, Enyedi and Lewis (2006) argued that the impact of Europe has been profound – but by no means direct – and concluded that the indirect impact on domestic political systems is likely to be more important, particularly regarding the structures of party systems and standardisation of party ideologies. Batory (2009), on the other hand, focused on individual parties and argued that direct EU impacts on national parties can be seen in the attention devoted to European issues in party programmes, organisational changes to integrate cohorts of MEPs

into national decision-making structures, as well as the changing power relations between EU-specialists and others within the parties. Timus (2011) also examined the direct and indirect mechanisms of the Europeanisation of Ukrainian parties and argued that the European People's Party had a direct but weak influence on aspiring Ukrainian members due to low incentives, a lack of clarity on membership requirements, and context-specific factors.

This chapter looks at the interplay of three conditions imposed by European transnational party federations on potential members from the Central and Eastern European countries. These are, as proposed by Pridham (2008): democratic conditions, a commitment to European integration, as well as ideological matching. All party federations employ conditionality when assessing new applications, and applicant parties are relatively closely followed and scrutinised with respect to these three principles. In addition, the study looks at the fourth region-specific condition, namely 'the post-Yugoslav commitments', which European transnational parties imposed on potential members from the Western Balkans; these encompass the need for good relations among regional parties and commitments to the EU's policy of stabilisation and consolidation of the region.

The particular focus of the chapter is, however, on the European commitment of (potential) party members. In other words, it aims to assess the extent to which parties developed or changed stances on the EU in reaction to the direct and indirect requirements of European transnational party federations. Therefore, the chapter groups a number of possible influences attributable to European transnational party federations into two distinct categories based on the direct and indirect impacts, as outlined in Table 7.1. The model builds upon the study of EU conditionality, which differentiates between two motives for party transformation: (i) as a result of strict, clearly spelled-out conditionality and tangible material incentives, or (ii) as a consequence of the socialisation and persuasion that gradually changed the perception of elites' identities and interests. A direct impact is therefore conceptualised as a set of written, formal obligations that transnational parties impose on potential members. This impact is examined through analysing the statutes of European transnational party federations; the chapter aimed to find the direct requirements on member parties' positions and policies on European integration. By doing so, the study seeks to assess how strictly 'EU commitment conditionality' has been employed and whether these requirements have caused parties to adopt or change attitudes towards the EU. In other words, the goal is to trace back the possible programmatic adaptations of the

Serbian and Croatian parties to the requirements of European transnational party federations. An indirect impact of European transnational party federations on national parties is conceptualised as a long-term influence that is diffused and exerted through policy education on EU affairs, political training and assistance provided by European transnational party federations and their political foundations. This link, often perceived as socialisation, is recognised by scholars (Dakowska 2002; Fink Hafner 2008; Pridham 2008) who argue that the socialisation and persuasion effects of transnational parties may significantly influence party stances and policies.

Table 7.1: Indicators of the influence of European transnational party federations on national party attitudes towards the EU

*Sources:* Adapted Mair (2000), Dakowska (2002), Fink Hafner (2008)

Type of impact	
Direct impact	Indirect impact
Changes in party programmes and policies on the EU as a result of requirements stated in programmatic documents of European transnational party federations	Subtle and gradual changes in party policies and rhetoric on the EU as a result of a long-term influence exerted through policy education and assistance provided by European transnational party federations and their political foundations (socialisation and persuasion)
Mode of analysis	
Analysis of programmatic documents of European transnational party federations (requirements related to 'EU commitments' of member parties)	Analysis of rhetoric and policy education of European transnational party federations, their foundations, and regional party networks aimed at influencing member parties' attitudes to the EU
Analysis of programmatic documents of national parties, rhetoric and parliamentary voting on EU issues	Analysis of changes in national party policies and rhetoric on the EU

The underpinning logic of the model is that party leaders make decisions on a party's general attitudes and policies towards the EU, and they may be motivated by strategic calculations or (presumably rarely) ideological adherence to the founding principles of the European transnational party federation. In order to fulfil the preconditions, as a direct impact, they may change programmatic documents and adjust them to these requirements. Following the decision by party elites, party members follow the leaders with more or less enthusiasm. That is when the role of European transnational party federations in the transformation of party members' attitudes to the EU may be significant. An indirect influence is aimed at the party as a whole, not only at political leaders. It may result in

subtle and gradual changes visible in party rhetoric and policies rather than programmatic documents. Therefore, an indirect influence is primarily assessed by analysing the rhetoric and policies of both European and Serbian/Croatian parties on the EU. This impact is examined by looking at the policy education on EU affairs of European transnational party federations aimed at socialising their Western Balkan members, as well as regional party networks sponsored by European transnational party federations and their foundations.

### **7.3 Serbian and Croatian parties' attitudes towards the EU and their relations with transnational party federations and foreign national parties**

This section examines in detail the pattern of transnational cooperation of Serbian and Croatian parties. It looks at how the direct and indirect impacts of European transnational party federations that have members in the Western Balkans (the European People's Party, the Party of European Socialists, and the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party) shaped the attitudes of Serbian and Croatian members. The transnational relations of parties that aspire to join European transnational party federations and parties without such intentions are also addressed. This section also looks at international party federations and the bilateral relations of Serbian and Croatian parties.

Compared to other Central and Eastern European parties, parties in Serbia and Croatia have a short history of transnational relations with international and European transnational party federations. There were no contacts until the 1995 Dayton peace agreement (Pridham 1999), which ended the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Socialist International and its member parties in Western Europe were the first that showed an interest, but there was little progress in cooperation with parties in Serbia and Croatia until the early 2000s because of their authoritarian regimes. Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia was, for example, distinctly a pariah party in transnational circles throughout the 1990s (Pridham 1999). The first contacts were established after the democratic changes in both countries; however, the majority of Croatian and some Serbian parties managed to secure transnational affiliations by the mid-2000s.

The transnational affiliations of Serbian and Croatian parties in 2013 are shown in Table 7.2. The most striking aspect here is that a significant number of relevant, parliamentary Serbian parties either did not have any international affiliations or had very troublesome relations with party federations, while almost all parties in Croatia were fully integrated into

transnational party organisations. In addition, radical right parties, characterised here as hard Eurosceptic, across both countries did not have international affiliation and maintained only bilateral relations with other national parties. The table shows that the European People's Party was the most coveted partner in the region and a federation that attracted the largest number of parties, while the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party gathered most pro-EU parties from both countries that also very closely cooperate between each other. As explained by its Slovenian MEP and the European Parliament's special rapporteur for Serbia, Jelko Kacin (Interview 2011), this was not the case with other European party federations, whose former Yugoslav members had difficulties in maintaining any bilateral relations. The case of the Serbian and Croatian parties also suggests that national parties in Central and Eastern Europe tend to join European transnational party federations primarily due to pragmatic and strategic reasons, while ideological closeness or loyalty to the principles that underlie these party federations were of secondary importance. Finally, the table shows the generally limited impact of European transnational party federations on attitudes of Serbian and Croatian parties towards the EU, with some exceptions in the cases of former hard Eurosceptic parties that were struggling to obtain European legitimacy after years of nationalistic and anti-European policies.

Table 7.2: Transnational affiliation of Serbian and Croatian parties and its impact on party attitudes towards the EU

Sources: Serbian Parliament (2013), Croatian Parliament (2013) and interviews with senior party officials

SERBIA Political party	Relations with European transnational party federation	Relations with party internationals	Impact on party attitudes towards the EU	
			Direct	Indirect
<b>Democratic Party</b>	Party of European Socialists Associate member	Socialist International Full member	Low impact	Low impact
<b>G17 Plus</b>	European People's Party Associate member	International Democrat Union Observer member	Low impact	Low impact
<b>Democratic Party of Serbia</b>	Withdrew from the European People's Party	International Democrat Union Member	Low impact	Low impact
<b>Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina</b>	European People's Party Observer member	It has no affiliation	Not applicable	Not applicable
<b>Liberal Democratic Party</b>	European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party Full member	Liberal International Observer member	Low impact	Low impact
<b>Serbian Progressive Party</b>	It has no affiliation It wants to join the European People's Party	It has no affiliation	Low impact	Intention to join the European People's Party may have somewhat contributed to party transformation in 2008
<b>Socialist Party of Serbia</b>	It has no affiliation It wants to join the Party of European Socialists	It has no affiliation It wants to join the Socialist International	Low impact	Intention to join the Party of European Socialists/Socialist International contributed to party transformation in 2008
<b>New Serbia</b>	It has no affiliation It wants to join the European People's Party	It has no affiliation	Low impact	Some impact due to party international isolation after 2008
<b>Serbian Radical Party</b>	It has no affiliation It has no intention to join any transnational party	It has no affiliation	Low impact	Low impact

Table 7.2 (Continued)

<b>CROATIA</b> <b>Political party</b>	<b>Relations with European transnational party federation</b>	<b>Relations with party internationals</b>	<b>Impact on party attitudes towards the EU</b>	
			<b>Direct</b>	<b>Indirect</b>
<b>Croatian Democratic Union</b>	European People's Party Associate member	International Democrat Union Centrist Democratic International member	Low impact	Significant impact of the European People's Party on reinforcing party's pro- European attitudes in the early 2000s
<b>Croatian Peasants' Party</b>	European People's Party Associate member	It has no affiliation	Low impact	Low impact
<b>Social Democratic Party</b>	Party of European Socialists Associate member	Socialist International Full member	Some impact on party stance towards the substance of EU integration	Low impact
<b>Croatian People's Party- Liberal Democrats</b>	European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party Full member	Liberal International Observer member	Low impact	Low impact
<b>Istrian Democratic Assembly</b>	European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party Full member	It has no affiliation	Not applicable	Not applicable
<b>Croatian Social Liberal Party</b>	European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party Full member	Liberal International Observer member	Not applicable	Not applicable
<b>Croatian Party of Rights</b>	It has no affiliation It has no intention to join any transnational party	It has no affiliation	Low impact	Low impact



### 7.3.1 The European People's Party

In 2013, the European People's Party had one associate member from Serbia – G17 Plus – and two from Croatia – the Croatian Democratic Union and the Croatian Peasant Party. Additionally, the Serbian Alliance of Hungarians in Vojvodina had the status of observer, while the Serbian Progressive Party and New Serbia expressed intentions to join this party federation. The Democratic Party of Serbia withdrew from the European People's Party in 2012. Given such a variance in relationship between the European People's Party and Serbian/Croatian parties, the examination of these linkages may provide insights into the extent to which transnational parties can affect party responses to Europe and how parties determined their stances on the EU in the context of their transnational affiliations.

While the European People's Party was the logical ideological and programmatic choice for the Democratic Party of Serbia and both Croatian parties, the affiliation of G17 Plus was the result of the party's pragmatic assessment and political calculation. Even though G17 Plus was essentially a liberal (not conservative), centre-right party, the party leadership opted for the most influential, not the closest, European transnational party federation, which reflected the party's pragmatic nature. G17 Plus initially did consider joining the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party. However, as the party vice president and a former Serbia deputy Prime Minister for European integration, Suzana Grubješić (Interview 2011), explained, 'the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party has proved to be too autistic', meaning they were not interested in this Serbian party. Grubješić pointed out that it was 'very important for the party to be close to the major national parties from the European People's Party that make all key decisions'. The fact that programmatic closeness was not a reason for the party's transnational affiliations was confirmed by Grubješić, who wondered 'what kind of ideological closeness G17 Plus has with, for example, the German Christian Democratic Union, which dedicates half of its programme to God and God's creations'. As with the majority of Serbian parties, the international affiliation of G17 Plus was therefore a consequence of circumstances and utilitarian assessment rather than ideological and political closeness to their European counterparts.

At the programmatic level, this study did not find evidence of any direct impact of the European People's Party on these parties' stances on the substance of the European integration. This may be the result of the fact that this European transnational party

federation did not directly require (potential) members to explicitly endorse in their programmes the model of the EU that it advocated.<sup>29</sup> Its programme (EPP 2011b) specifically called for ‘a gradual, but resolute, transformation of the European Community into a genuine political union on a federal model’, while the statute (EPP 2011a) stated that one of the obligations of the members of the European People’s Party is ‘to promote the process of unification and federal integration in Europe as a constituent element of the European Union’. Its statute did not further elaborate party members’ obligations in this regard, although it did provide that associate membership can be granted to a party that subscribes to the party’s objectives (EPP 2011a). Nevertheless, Serbian and Croatian members have never elaborated their stances on the substance of the European integration. The Croatian Democratic Union’s 2002 programme included a reference to the principle of subsidiarity, but in the context of a rather sceptic stance on deepening transnational cooperation. It specified that, ‘like other European peoples’ parties, it advocates that the devolution of powers to supranational institutions or organizations can be realized only on the principle of subsidiarity, so that national competencies would not be unnecessarily internationalized’ (HDZ 2002, p.28). However, after these attempts to determine its stance towards the substance of the European integration, the party has not dealt with this issue in its subsequent programmes (see Chapter 3). These parties certainly did not advocate a federal Europe, as conceptualised in the documents of the European People’s Party.

The key issue for these parties was, however, their stance on their countries’ membership in the EU. Even though the programmatic documents of the European People’s Party did not directly require its members to explicitly advocate EU membership, one of the party’s objectives was ‘to promote the process of unification and integration in Europe’ (EPP 2011a). This was an important precondition for aspiring Balkan members. In the context of potential (candidate) states, stances on joining the EU were essentially what Pridham (2008, p.80) called ‘a commitment to European integration’, rather than allegiance to a federal Europe. As elaborated in the previous chapters, at the programmatic level, all members of the European People’s Party from Serbia and Croatia in 2013 advocated EU accession and thus met this criterion. However, it is less likely that these parties’ stances on the EU were a consequence of the requirements of this party federation. They were either the result of

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<sup>29</sup> The European People’s Party used to have a list of membership criteria, which included requirements that a party needs to have ‘a special reference in the party programme to European integration based on the federal model’ and that it must acknowledge the principle of subsidiarity. These requirements were introduced in 1996, but they were later abolished (Timus 2011, p.8).

ideological commitment irrespective of the European People's Party (G17 Plus), or were strategically driven and only reinforced by it (the Croatian Democratic Union).

Regarding indirect impacts, the European People's Party started early with an attempt to influence parties in both countries. To that end, it set up the Western Balkan Democracy Initiative in 1999, aimed at establishing a channel of communication and cooperation, and assisting and encouraging the strengthening of democratic structures and the party-building process (Karamanlis 2006). This party federation specifically used four key instruments: fact-finding missions, seminars, inter-regional conferences and publications. The European People's Party, therefore, offered regional parties a channel to transmit EU experience and practices, aimed at getting them acquainted with EU policies and ultimately impact their stances and activities. The results were, however, rather varied. There are indications that the European People's Party played an important role in the transformation and European socialisation of the Croatian Democratic Union, including its attitudes and policies towards the EU, in the early 2000s. In stark contrast, it failed to exert any influence on the Democratic Party of Serbia and the party's post-2008 negative attitudes towards Serbian EU membership.

The European People's Party and its members have proven to be an important factor in the ideological transformation of the Croatian Democratic Union in the early 2000s. The Croatian Democratic Union was largely perceived as a nationalist party with questionable democratic and European credentials in the 1990s. As such, it found it difficult to develop relations with parties from the EU, although it became a member of the European Union of Christian parties in 1995 (Fink Hafner 2008), which was a conservative European party organisation that merged with the European People's Party in 1999. Following electoral defeat and the death of its autocratic founder, Franjo Tudjman, the party embarked on a gradual ideological transformation in the early 2000s, led by its new, moderate leader, Ivo Sanader. Until 2002, Sanader maintained a rather nationalist political outlook and strongly opposed cooperation with the ICTY, which was the key precondition for Croatian EU accession. However, after emerging as the winner of an intra-party conflict with the hard-line nationalists in 2002, he declared accession to the EU as the party's principal goal. The new pro-European rhetoric that started to emerge in the run-up to the 2003 election was in stark contrast to the previous nationalistic rhetoric and actions pursued by Sanader, such as a massive 2001 rally against war crimes indictments.

There are strong indications that the European People's Party and its members played an important role in the party's ideological transformation, given that Sanader forged unusually strong links with this party federation, which, in turn, impacted the stances and policies he pursued. Together with the factors examined in the previous chapters, it appears that the European People's Party significantly contributed to the party's transformation from largely Eurosceptic and nationalist to pro-European and centre-right. This was confirmed by Mirjana Mladineo (Interview 2011), who was well informed about Croatian parties' relations with European transnational parties given her work as a former Croatian ambassador to the EU and a political advisor to Croatian president Ivo Josipović (who was responsible for the EU and international organisations). She argued that 'Sanader was essentially the project of the European People's Party' and further specified that Sanader had 'absolutely fantastic relations with the European People's Party and its members, which strongly influenced the Croatian Democratic Union in the early 2000s'. Although it is difficult to assess whether these linkages triggered or reinforced the process of party reorientation, it certainly contributed to it. The linkages were the result of the European People's Party's interest in spreading its influence in the Western Balkans, as well as the Croatian Democratic Union's strong intention to obtain European legitimisation.

The European People's Party's enthusiasm to 'transform' the Croatian Democratic Union was not a surprise given that, at that time, this European party federation did not have any members in the region. As Karamanlis (2006, p.58) argued, after the democratic changes in Serbia and Croatia in 2000, the European People's Party promptly realised that the future of the Western Balkans lay with the EU and that the transformation of these societies into well-functioning democracies should be its foremost priority. As a result, the European People's Party amended its statutes in 2001 and, for the first time, permitted the non-EU, Western Balkan parties to join. Importantly, as Mirjana Mladineo (Interview 2011) argued, the European People's Party also strategically supported Sanader in the intra-party conflict with nationalistic factions in 2002. As a result, a few months later, the Croatian Democratic Union became an observing member and eventually, in 2004, an associate member of the European People's Party.

The importance of transnational links became evident when the Croatian Democratic Union decided to start formally advocating EU membership and fulfilling all the conditions. Senior party official, former chair of the joint parliamentary committee EU-Croatia and state secretary of the Croatian ministry of European integration, Marija

Pejčinović Burić (Interview 2011), explained that the party clearly stated for the first time that it absolutely supported Croatian EU integration in November 2002. It was when Gordan Jandroković, later Croatian minister of foreign affairs, informed the European People's Party and its German party members about a new party orientation, following Sanader's instruction to reveal the party's adjusted position. She stressed that this was a key moment, after which the party adopted new rhetoric and policies regarding the EU and publicly declared its new orientation. She pointed out that Sanader personally played a key role in developing strong ties with national parties that were members of the European People's Party. The success of the party's transformation was directly related to these linkages, since, as Pejčinović Burić (Interview 2011) explained, 'Sanader fascinated the counterparts from the European People's Party by strong charisma and consequently managed easily and swiftly to prove the new party orientation to members of this party federation'. The key reasons for Sanader's intention to get closer and forge strong relations with the European People's Party was the important role played by these 'external veto actors' that could have effectively prevented this party's coming to power if it had not transformed. The same mechanism seemed evident in the transformation of the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party in the late 2000s, as discussed later in this chapter.

Sanader (2006) himself argued the Croatian Democratic Union used the four years in opposition, from January 2000 to November 2003, to undertake an internal party reform and reinvent itself with the aim of bringing the party in line with the standards of the European People's Party. He pointed out that the conferences and seminars organised by the European People's Party helped this party to renew itself and re-emphasise its European orientation, which was conducive to its victory in the 2003 parliamentary elections. Moreover, the strong links forged with members of the European People's Party, especially the German Christian Democrats and the Austrian People's Party, helped facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise to the Croatian Democratic Union (Sanader 2006). In other words, close bilateral relations, in the framework of the European People's Party, played an important role in re-socialising some of the party's nationalist and Eurosceptic officials, who felt betrayed by a Europe that had not done enough to support the Croatian independence war. Therefore, the indirect impacts of the European People's Party on the Croatian Democratic Union were important at an early stage of its transformation; however, as Haughton and Fisher (2008) argued, it would be inaccurate to see the European People's Party as the only driver of change. They claimed that it was

rather a combination of electoral defeat and the desire for international respectability that led the party, which had strong national aspirations, to rethink its political orientation and attempt to re-brand itself as a mainstream European centre-right party.

On the other side, the Democratic Party of Serbia is a prime example of a party immune to transnational influences. In other words, this party shows the limitations of the influence of transnational party federations on their member parties. The Democratic Party of Serbia obtained observer status of the European People's Party in 2003 and associate membership status in 2005. As one of the leading parties that overthrew the Milošević regime in 2000, an advocate for Serbian EU membership and with an ideology embedded in conservative values, this party did not have to prove its democratic and pro-EU credentials, as well as its ideological closeness the European People's Party.

However, following the 2008 recognition of Kosovo as an independent state by major EU countries, this party started opposing Serbian EU membership, and it adopted a policy of military and political neutrality in 2011. This had a significant negative impact on the party's international relations and the party found itself, as its vice president, Slobodan Samardžić (Interview 2011), explained in an interview, 'in international isolation or semi-isolation'. It had a particularly troublesome relationship with the European People's Party. The main issue was the fact that the party believed that Serbia should remain outside the process of European integration given the EU's position on Kosovo. On the other hand, leading members of the European People's Party expressed strong support for Kosovo's independence. They called on Serbia to 'free itself from the illusions of renewed influence over Kosovo which hold it back, and instead go down the road towards Europe', and sponsored a resolution in the European Parliament asking the remaining five EU member states to recognise the independence of Kosovo (Posselt 2010). As a result, the Democratic Party of Serbia had long been on the verge of a suspension and expulsion from the European People's Party, and it finally decided to withdraw its membership in early 2012. On that occasion, the party stated:

The Democratic Party of Serbia is no longer able to be member of the European People's Party, because of our decision that Serbia should declare political neutrality [given that the EU implements the policy of an independent Kosovo]. Our formal abandonment of the European People's Party means that the Democratic Party of Serbia will co-operate with European centre-right parties on a new basis, taking into account our mutual interests. (DSS 2012b)

This was the culmination of the long ‘misunderstanding’ between the two sides. On one side, the party argued that it is ‘a fundamentally pro-European party, which respects the core European and democratic principles that the European People’s Party rests upon’ as argued by its international secretary and MP, Nikola Lazić (Interview 2011). He pointed out that the main values of the European People’s Party are indisputable, given that one of the key European values is respect for territorial integrity. Therefore, the Democratic Party of Serbia argued that its position on Kosovo issues was in line with the key principles of the European People’s Party; however, this party federation abandoned this principle only in the case of Serbian territorial integrity, according to Lazić. He added that ‘although it is desirable that the attitudes of the members of the European People’s Party are well coordinated, parties do not have to go to Brussels to get their opinion’. Consequently, the party vice president, Samardžić (Interview 2011), claimed, ‘the Democratic Party of Serbia has been under suspicion, because it does not want to play by the rules imposed by the EU, regarding the Kosovo status’.

On the other hand, some important members of the European People’s Party perceived the Democratic Party of Serbia ‘as a nightmare’ and regretted allowing it to become a member, as explained by its German MEP and former chair of the European Parliament’s Delegation for the South Eastern Europe, Doris Pack (Interview 2011). She specifically argued that the Democratic Party of Serbia has never been pro-European, ‘although the party leader Koštunica gave the impression that he would respect reality and I thought we should give him a chance’. Pack further explained in an interview that:

By being an observer member of the European People’s Party, this party should have gotten the smell of Europe. They had a chance to speak with other leaders and that should have opened up their minds, but they behaved autistically. It did not work. They did not use the chance they had. It was lost time and lost efforts. It makes me furious. We have to kick them out.

In other words, ‘European socialisation’ which, as perceived by the European People’s Party, includes *de facto* acceptance of the Kosovo independence, did not work in the case of this party. The then-president of the European People’s Party, Wilfried Martens, tried to influence this party’s policies on a number of occasions. After the 2008 election, Martens (2008) argued:

Despite the reservations that Koštunica expressed during the emotionally-charged election campaign about EU foreign policy decisions, I am convinced that he will accept the European choice that was clearly expressed by the citizens of Serbia.

Košunica is a great patriot and I know that he will make the patriotic choice, which is the European choice.

However, the Democratic Party of Serbia remained impervious to the influence of the European People's Party, and its perception of the national interest was in direct opposition to the stances and policies pursued by the majority of the members of this party federation.

This points to the limited impact of the European People's Party when it faced parties that have principled, ideologically driven stances on what European values entail, as well as members for which transnational party membership is not a high priority. Specifically, as discussed in Chapter 3, the position of the Democratic Party of Serbia regarding the EU and Kosovo was a principled one. This party even compromised its electoral performance because of its Kosovo politics (as elaborated in Chapter 4), and the weak incentives from being a member of the European People's Party certainly did not outweigh the party's convictions. Moreover, unlike the majority of other Serbian parties, this party did not feel the need to prove its loyalty to the principles of democracy and European values or to get European legitimacy by being a member of a European transnational party federation. The Democratic Party of Serbia did not attach great importance to its membership in the European People's Party. Its former vice president, Miloš Jovanović (Interview 2011), criticised other Serbian parties that wanted to join European transnational party federations at any price, by saying that 'nobody has ever heard of European party federations in other countries, while it is only in Serbia where the membership in these organisations is perceived as important, additional legitimacy for political parties'. This party, however, forged links with international partners that either shared its position on Kosovo (all the major Russian parties) or its Euroscepticism (the European Conservatives and Reformists Group and the UK's Conservative Party).

### **7.3.2 The Party of European Socialists**

The Party of European Socialists had two members from these countries, the Democratic Party in Serbia and the Social Democratic Party in Croatia. Unlike the European People's Party, the Party of European Socialists had more straightforward relations with its Serbian and Croatian members. European commitment has never been an issue for these parties, given that both members have always been pro-European parties that advocated their



country's membership of the EU (as discussed in Chapter 3). Ideological closeness was, however, the issue for the Democratic Party due to the party's liberal political legacy.

The Social Democratic Party of Croatia became a member of the Socialist International in the early 1990s and gained associate status of the Party of European Socialists in 2004. Unlike the Democratic Party in Serbia, this party has always been ideologically a social democratic party and the Party of European Socialists has been its natural international partner. The Democratic Party was founded as a centre-right and liberal party, which started shifting towards the centre-left after coming to power in 2000. It became a member of the Socialist International in 2003 and an associate member the Party of European Socialists in 2008. The then-party president, Zoran Djindjić, personally pushed for the strengthening of social-democratic values in the party. A European People's Party MEP, Doris Pack (Interview 2011), emphasised that it was a decision made personally by Djindjić, under the influence of Gerhard Schroeder, then the German chancellor and a leader of Social Democratic Party. Well known as a pragmatic politician, Djindjić decided to join this European party federation assuming that membership of the Party of European Socialists – which, at that time, had a majority in the European Parliament – would bolster the Democratic Party's credibility. The case of the Democratic Party is thus one more example of a party that joined a transnational party group for strategic rather than ideological reasons.

Unlike the European People's Party, the Party of European Socialists' statute did not contain any reference to a desired form of European integration. It only talked about the general principles of freedom, equality, solidarity, democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law as the basis for European integration (PES 2011, Article 3). Its party members appeared, therefore, not to be obliged to adopt any particular position on this issue. Consequently, the Democratic Party has never elaborated its position on the substance of European integration. However, the Social Democratic Party of Croatia did attempt to elaborate its position on this issue. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Social Democratic Party advocated a social-democratic vision of the EU and expressed 'principled opposition to a Europe of unbridled capital as well as support for a Europe of social solidarity' (SDP 2007a, p.42). It stood for the interests of preserving national identity, social solidarity and responsibility, without allowing 'the market economy to become a market society that only favours the rich' in Europe (SDP 2007a, p.42). It therefore seems that the party formulated its stances based on its international partners, although it is questionable

to what extent it adhered to these ‘borrowed’ principles. As its international secretary and former MP, Karolina Leaković (Interview, 2011), specified, discussing a desirable form of the EU is simply not a topic and ‘nobody defines what being a pro-European party entails, since political parties do not have the capacity for such discussion’.

On the other hand, although the Party of European Socialists statute did not foresee that members must support their countries’ membership of the EU, it is clear that a European orientation was the key prerequisite for parties wishing to get membership status. The Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party have always advocated their countries’ membership in the EU, which was clearly stated in all programmatic documents. It may be thus concluded that the Party of European Socialists had some impact on the Social Democratic Party’s vision of European integration, while support for EU membership was adopted initially by both parties long before they joined the Party of European Socialists. In other words, the direct impact was limited and, in the case of the Democratic Party, rather weak.

With regard to the indirect impacts, the Party of European Socialists has been proactively involved in the Western Balkans since the mid-1990s and has built solid networks with socialist and social democratic political parties and movements (PES 2010). However, in terms of socialisation and impacts on the attitudes of the Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Party towards the EU, it appears that the Party of European Socialists did not play an important role, given that their European credentials have never been questioned. Leaković (Interview 2011) specifically explained that this transnational party has never sent a fact-finding mission to Croatia, and that it did not scrutinise the party’s attitudes towards the EU since its pro-European orientation was adopted in the 1990s. Leaković thus concluded that ‘the Party of European Socialists has never imposed its views or asked the Social Democratic Party to change or adopt particular policy’. Conversely, the former Democratic Party’s international secretary and MP, Miloš Jevtić (Interview 2011), argued that the Party of European Socialists applied very rigid monitoring. However, he explained that this party federation primarily analysed whether this party was ideologically eligible for a membership (not its pro-European orientation), given its long tradition of cooperation with the European People’s Party as well as its liberal and right-leaning ideological legacy.

### 7.3.3 The European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party

The European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party had a number of members in these countries – the Liberal Democratic Party from Serbia, and the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats, the Istrian Democratic Assembly and the Croatian Social Liberal Party. Unlike other European transnational party federations, the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party granted full membership to parties from countries that were not members of the EU, as explained by the party's political advisors in charge of Serbian and Croatian members (Frantz, Interview 2011; Tanahatoc, Interview 2011). Therefore, the Liberal Democratic Party from Serbia has been a fully-fledged and active member of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party since 2008, as its international secretary, Dušan Gamser (Interview 2011), explained, while the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats joined the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party in 2001 and has become the party with the longest tradition of transnational links in the region.

The statute of this party federation (ELDR 2004, Article 5) provided that membership was open to all political parties in Europe that accepted the policy programmes of the association and the Stuttgart Declaration. The Stuttgart Declaration (1978), as a key programmatic document of this party federation, set out the basic liberal principles for the creation of a common Europe, such as the protection and promotion of the rights and freedoms of the individual, and as stated in its preamble, that 'peace, freedom and prosperity in Europe can best be assured if the European Community progresses towards a European Union'. There were, however, no requirements for party members to directly endorse any particular concept of Europe. As a result, the programmes of the Serbian and Croatian members did not say anything about the concept of Europe for which they stood. However, their limitless support for their countries' EU membership was clearly spelled out in their programmes. All members of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party were perceived as the most pro-European parties in these countries. It therefore appears that there was no direct link between these parties' attitudes towards the EU and their transnational affiliation, given that these parties have always been pro-European and it has been a core part of their ideologies and 'world views'. Similarly, with regard to the indirect impact, the socialisation and political training provided by the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party might have only reinforced – and certainly would not have caused – their consistent pro-EU stances.

### 7.3.4 Parties intending to join European transnational party federations

The peculiar feature of Serbian party politics is that three core parties had no transnational party affiliations (Table 7.2.). These are the Socialist Party of Serbia, which aimed to join the Party of European Socialists, as well as the Serbian Progressive Party and New Serbia, whose goal was membership of the European People's Party. The space for the direct or indirect influence of European transnational party federations appears to have been greatest in the case of these parties, which sought membership motivated by the search for European legitimacy.

The Socialist Party of Serbia was long perceived as an anti-democratic, anti-European and nationalist party that opposed Serbian EU integration, and consequently it was isolated internationally. For a long time, the Socialists were not deemed suitable for membership of any transnational party organisation and the party did not have any activities in this regard. Pridham (2008, p.92) noted that, as a party not welcome in EU circles, it cultivated some links with the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia and with the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, in the sense of mutual attendance at party congresses and visiting delegations. However, after a radical change of policies in 2008, the party expressed an intention to join the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists, which became the key goal explicitly stated in the party programme:

The Socialist Party of Serbia is ready and open for cooperation with all parties and movements of democratic, progressive and in particular socialist, social democratic and leftist orientation in the country and the world. It is particularly interested in membership of the Socialist International as well as the Party of European Socialists. (SPS 2010, p.49)

However, the values and principles upon which the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists were founded were not of great importance for this party, which perceived its potential membership as merely instrumental in obtaining European legitimacy. The party's international secretary, Nataša Gaćeša (Interview 2011), thus pointed out in an interviews that membership in the Socialist International 'may bring legitimacy to the party in the eyes of the west. That is the key reason for our intention to join the Socialist International, while all other reasons are absolutely less relevant'.

The party has not, at the time of writing, secured membership in the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists. However, its transformation was noted by potential international partners, who argued, 'the reforms of the Socialist Party of Serbia and all

developments related to the party should be closely followed. The party has strongly expressed its willingness to become a modern pro-European party and positive developments in this direction have been noted' (Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialist and Democrats 2010). Kristian Vigenin (Interview 2011), the Bulgarian foreign affairs minister and a head of the Party of European Socialists' Balkan task force, further specified that this party federation closely monitored the Socialists' rhetoric and politics, since the Socialists need to have 'a positive track record' in order to join the Party of European Socialists. An advisor on international relations for the Party of European Socialists, David Capezzuto (Interview 2011), similarly argued that 'nothing goes unnoticed' and that the Socialists 'have made enormous progress'. Nevertheless, the party particularly found it difficult to develop good relations with Western Balkans members of the Party of European Socialists, since they still 'find it difficult to admit that the Socialist Party of Serbia has transformed' (Vigenin, Interview 2011). Gaćeša (Interview 2011) also confirmed that 'scepticism towards the Socialist Party of Serbia is still very present, since they perceive the Socialists as if it is still 1991'.

Getting international legitimisation was, therefore, an important factor that contributed to strategically driven party transformation. Although it is unlikely that it triggered the transformation, the intention to join the Party of European Socialists and the Socialist International was a strong reinforcing factor that played an important role in the party's decision to alter itself. As later discussed, Western ambassadors were aware of this and pressured parties to change, promising international party affiliation in return (Kralev 2012). In other words, parties seeking international legitimisation were susceptible to foreign pressures which, together with the strategic incentives discussed in Chapter 4, induced the party's reorientation in 2008.

Following its 2008 ideological reinvention, the Serbian Progressive Party expressed intention to join the European People's Party. However, this party was unsuccessful in securing international affiliations and maintained only bilateral relations with neighbouring members of the European People's Party, such as the Hungarian Fidesz and the Bulgarian Citizens for the European Development parties. Its potential European partners, particularly parties from the former Yugoslavia, showed a high level of scepticism towards the party leaders, given that they had advocated nationalist and anti-European politics within the Serbian Radical Party for almost twenty years. As a consequence, the party has yet to prove its European orientation and to become a legitimate centre-right party.

Furthermore, the Serbian Progressive Party signed a cooperation agreement with the Austrian Eurosceptic Freedom Party (FPÖ) in 2011, which envisaged 'the creation of a Europe of free nations and self-determined people in the framework of a grouping of national sovereign states' (SNS-FPÖ 2011). It seems, therefore, that this party stood for a radical transformation of the EU and intergovernmental, rather than supranational, cooperation among sovereign European states. More importantly, the agreement provided for the establishment of a new political party at a European level, 'A free European movement'. In other words, the case of this party seems to confirm Pridham's (2008, p.82) argument that bilateral transnational links can sometimes reveal more about a party's real ideological sympathies than formal transnational multilateral party cooperation. This party's controversial and rather confusing bilateral international relations were therefore a reflection of its eclectic and weakly rooted ideological underpinnings and lack of firm fundamental principles. On the other hand, the European People's Party carefully monitored the actions and attitudes of this party. Doris Pack (Interview 2011) thus argued that the content of its policies was most important. She specified that 'the European People's Party will be very careful. We should wait and see. Their membership was not an immediate question. We made a mistake with Koštunica because we believed that it would help him to learn a bit more about Europe. We should not make a second mistake'.

The decision of the leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party to take a radically new position and start advocating Serbian accession to the EU was highly pragmatic and strategic, as discussed in the previous chapters. Although there was no indication that this was due to the party's intention to join the European People's Party, this factor may have contributed somewhat to the party's overall ideological reorientation. As a mostly strategically driven party, the Serbian Progressive Party was inclined to accommodate foreign demands, although, as we shall see, this was more related to the pressures of Western ambassadors than any demands of the European People's Party. However, following the party's reorientation, a need to become a legitimate European party became an important driver for further transformation. Joining the European People's Party was of great importance for the Serbian Progressive Party, because it would be the ultimate proof of its transformation. As a result, the Serbian Progressive Party, compared to other Serbian parties, was most prone to accept foreign influences, while its policies clearly aimed at proving that it was a new, pro-European party that had nothing to do with the radical right Serbian Radical Party. As explained by Damjan Jović (Interview 2011), a member of the party's executive committee, 'the party specifically strove to present

itself as a predictable and normal partner to members of the European People's Party as well as to eliminate prejudice and antagonism that arises from the ignorance of some political parties'. This was a consequence of the fact that this party's pro-European commitment (together with its democratic, ideological and post Yugoslav commitments) was widely questioned among its potential European partners.

Finally, the two striking shifts of New Serbia's stances on Serbian EU integration since 2008, as discussed in Chapter 4, were profoundly strategic and pragmatic moves in response to the fear of political marginalisation as a result of domestic political contestation. Moreover, the party expressed an intention to join the European People's Party and sent a formal membership request in 2011. The party transformation may be seen, to a certain degree, in the context of its intention to position itself as a pro-European, centre-right party that was potentially eligible to join the European People's Party. However, as discussed later in the chapter, what significantly contributed to the party's transformation was its isolation from EU institutions and the international community after it adopted a Eurosceptic stance in 2008.

### **7.3.5 Parties not intending to join European transnational party federations**

Two radical right and hard Eurosceptic parties that opposed Serbian and Croatian EU membership, the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights, had no relations with European party federations and only maintained bilateral contacts with ideologically similar national parties. The Serbian Radical Party was generally not inclined to maintain close relations with foreign parties, especially from the EU. This party opposed transnational multilateral party cooperation and was therefore not a member of a European transnational party federation. It has never expressed any intention to join them, which was in line with its negative stance towards the EU. Former MP and deputy president of the parliamentary group, Aleksandar Martinović (Interview 2011), explained, 'this party did not seek membership of European transnational party federations, because they function within EU structures. It would be contradictory to argue against the EU and be in favour of a membership of these parties.'

The party compensated for this lack of multilateral party cooperation through bilateral cooperation with similar parties from the EU and Russia. The absolute priority of the party was close cooperation with Russian parties: United Russia, the Communist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party and Just Russia. The closest partner of the Radicals was Just

Russia. As a centre-left party that called for a strong welfare state and was a member of the Socialist International, this may be seen as a surprising partner of the radical-right parties. However, given the leftist nature of the Radicals' socio-economic programme, the two parties did not appear too ideologically opposed. They signed an agreement on cooperation in 2010, based 'on the principles of social justice, human rights, and preservation of equal and multipolar global relations' (Levichev 2010, p.5). The intention of the two parties was to undertake joint efforts to preserve and strengthen the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia and Serbia in accordance with the norms of international law, and to help Serbia in the implementation of the pipeline project 'South Stream', make more productive use of the Free Trade Agreement with Russia, and to provide for the independent economic development of Serbia (Levichev 2010). The Radicals maintained bilateral contacts with only two parties from the EU, the Slovak National Party and the French National Front – the latter being 'the last resort of right extremist parties from post-communist countries' (Pridham 2008, p.98). The Radicals thus had failed to establish any meaningful and strong bilateral or multilateral cooperation with other parties.

Similarly, the Croatian Party of Rights did not develop multilateral and bilateral relations. The party had no international party affiliation, although in 2006 it did submit an application for membership of the European People's Party, but the European People's Party never replied. Party president Daniel Srb (Interview 2011) thus claimed in an interview, 'although this party federation was extraordinarily influential', his party was not any more interested in its membership. Srb explained that 'getting a membership is a very long process. It depends on the biggest member from the country, that is, the Croatian Democratic Union, and the Croatian Party of Rights does not want to depend on it'. Srb also argued that it co-operated symbolically with the Freedom Party of Austria and the Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), although its most desirable partners would be the Polish Law and Justice Party and the Czech Civic Democratic Party. However, in the run-up to the first Croatian elections for the European Parliament in 2013, the Croatian Party of Rights was directly supported by the French National Front.

The Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights were, therefore, typical radical right, hard Eurosceptic parties that cooperated bilaterally with ideologically similar parties, without having any international or European party affiliations. The Serbian Radical Party perceived European party federations as a symbol of the 'evil' West and it has never tried to become a member of them, nor did it ever maintain contacts



with mainstream political parties from the EU. Unlike some other Serbian parties, it did not seek European legitimacy and felt rather comfortable in isolation from the West – co-operating instead with leading Russian parties, with whom it shared fundamental values. Even if it wanted to, the Serbian Radical Party essentially could not meet the criteria for membership of European transnational party federations. The party was, therefore, immune to Western impact and its strong, ideologically driven opposition to the EU remained a constant element of its politics. Similarly, after a failed attempt to join the European People's Party, the Croatian Party of Rights had no intention to apply again. Instead it has strengthened its traditional Euroscepticism since 2008 and focused on cooperation with other radical right parties that voiced the same hard Euroscepticism.

#### **7.4 Parties' attitudes towards the EU and their relations with EU institutions and foreign governments**

This section looks at party relations with EU institutions and foreign governments. Given the limited data available on Croatian parties, the focus of this section is on Serbian parties. It differentiates between parties that were clearly susceptible to the influence of EU institutions and foreign governments, and those that remained impervious to it. It is argued that whether parties had principled positions on the EU or not was a key factor in explaining party behaviour. Namely, parties with principled and ideologically driven positions on the EU (either enthusiastic or sceptic) were rather unreceptive to these influences (in the case of the Democratic Party of Serbia or the Serbian Radical Party), while there is evidence that this was an important factor in the positions of strategically motivated parties (the Socialist Party of Serbia) or parties that did not have a firm stance on the EU (New Serbia).

The thesis looked at the specific linkages between EU institutions and party positions on the EU. It identified direct links of communication between the European Commission and the European Parliament on one side, and both ruling and opposition parties in Serbia on the other. Specifically, the European Commission's officials responsible for Serbian EU accession, including the Enlargement Commissioners, had close and regular contacts with senior party leaders. In addition, the European Parliament and individual MEPs maintained contact with relevant parties, primarily in the form of study visits of the Parliament's delegations to Serbia. To what extent were these linkages important for party positions on the EU?

On one hand, it appears that EU institutions and officials did not explicitly and directly attempt to influence the policies and stances of Serbian political parties. They did not formulate policies and instruments to do so, and there was no conditionality regarding (potential) candidate countries' politics and individual political parties. An authoritative official of the European Commission's Directorate-General Enlargement (Interview 2011) directly responsible for Serbian EU integration, who preferred to stay anonymous, argued therefore that the European Commission did not have any active policy towards Serbian parties and particularly emphasised that it did not attempt to influence their policies and stances on the EU.

On the other hand, this research suggests that the overall unofficial impact of EU institutions, primarily the European Commission, has been rather strong, and some Serbian parties were highly sensitive to it. Specifically, none of the hard Eurosceptic parties had any relations with EU institutions and it appears that scepticism towards the EU in the context of candidate countries in reality de-legitimised and disqualified such parties from having any associations with the EU. In other words, a domestic political consensus on EU integration may have been an unofficial aim of EU institutions in candidate countries and minimising the political significance of Eurosceptic parties may have been in their interest. EU leverage was therefore indirect and most visible in the fact that EU officials did not have any contacts with Eurosceptic (and often nationalist) parties; this may be seen as an unofficial policy of isolating such parties, which in some cases produced results (New Serbia). Crucially, as discussed in Chapter 5, the EU effectively blocked hard Eurosceptic parties from government participation in these countries. This contributed significantly to the transformation of some Serbian parties, particularly the Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia.

The mere lack of contact sent a clear and strong message to Serbian political parties, most visible in the case of New Serbia. As discussed in Chapter 4, this soft Eurosceptic party adopted politics of opposition to Serbian EU membership in 2008 following the *de facto* EU-supported proclamation of Kosovo's independence. As a consequence, the party found itself in unofficial isolation, since 'nobody wanted to talk to the party officials', as its vice president, Dubravka Filipovski (Interview 2011), emphasised. Fearing permanent political marginalisation, the party again shifted position and started supporting Serbian EU accession in 2010, which was partly due to the lack of international contacts. Filipovski argued, 'although no one pressured the party to take a pro-European stance (including EU

institutions), the fact that nobody contacted, or showed an interest to talk to the party officials strongly contributed to its re-transformation'. She further specified, 'the party had to change, although there were no pressures. However, as soon as the party shifted policies, the contacts with EU institutions and foreign ambassadors were re-established'. New Serbia was therefore an example of a party susceptible to foreign influences, primarily from EU institutions, as a consequence of its soft Euroscepticism. In other words, the party did not express principled hard Euroscepticism or Euroenthusiasm and did not have a firm stance on this issue, which created conditions for the party's susceptibility to foreign influences.

Similarly, the fundamental transformation of the leaders of the Serbian Progressive Party may be seen in relation to their contacts with EU institutions. Having been in isolation for almost two decades, which included the ban on travelling to the EU at the height of their nationalist and anti-European politics in the late 1990s, the leaders of this party started maintaining close contacts with EU officials in 2009. Although it is difficult to assess the extent to which this contact contributed to the party's transformation, the European Commission was undoubtedly interested in reaching as broad a consensus as possible in candidate countries on their EU accession, and the transformation of the then-leading opposition party was an important development for the European Commission. Specifically, the new orientation of the Serbian Progressive Party was immediately noticed by the European Commission, which perceived it as 'a clear example that Serbia has normalised, since it is important that the two biggest parties [Democratic Party and Serbian Progressive Party] support Serbian EU accession' (EC official, Interview 2011). The EU enlargement commissioner, Štefan Füle (2010), stated specifically after his first meeting with the Progressive's leader that he 'encouraged Mr Nikolić and his party, as well as all Serbian political actors eager to advance Serbia's European aspirations, to act constructively and responsibly'. Djurković (2011, p.208) thus emphasised that the impact of EU institutions on moderate members of the Serbian Radical party to break away and form a new pro-European party should not be underestimated. This was particularly important given the pragmatic reorientation of this party that lacked firm, ideological beliefs (as discussed in Chapter 4) and as such was rather receptive to foreign influences.

Conversely, parties with firm, principled Eurosceptic stances remained unaffected by the lack of contact with EU institutions and were generally not prone to shifting or even moderating their positions. The most striking is the case of the Democratic Party of Serbia.

As discussed in Chapter 3, this party adopted a policy of political and military neutrality and opposition to Serbian EU membership in reaction to the *de facto* EU-supported, unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence in 2008. As a consequence, the party has been in unofficial isolation from Western countries and EU institutions ever since, although the European Commission did not have any formal policy of non-cooperation with the party. An official of the European Commission's Directorate-General Enlargement (Interview 2011) specifically claimed, 'the representatives of the Democratic Party of Serbia are most welcome if they ask for a meeting'. This official further specified that the European Commission did not perceive this party as anti-European or nationalist, since 'it did not declare itself against the EU *per se*'. She explained, 'this party has always supported Serbian EU accession, but it disagrees with the way that the EU treats Kosovo'. However, in practice, the European Commission did not maintain any relations with this party's officials, who had contributed significantly to Serbian EU accession and closely co-operated with officials of the Commission until 2008. This, however, had no effect on the party's policies, unlike its long-term coalition partner, New Serbia. Furthermore, the party itself decided to detach itself from EU institutions that, as its vice president, Samardžić (Interview 2011), argued, 'sponsored the fake state of Kosovo'. Samardžić further explained that 'the lack of contacts was not only the result of the Western countries' decision to distance themselves from this party, but also the consequence of a mutual desire for distancing'. He added, 'this was also the way for the party to protest against EU's policy towards Kosovo'.

Similarly, the radical right and hard Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party has always been in isolation from the West and EU institutions. The policy of non-engagement with this party, aimed at its political isolation as an ultra-nationalist party, has been strictly enforced by the US, whose officials have rigorously adhered to that strategy since 2000 (Spoerri 2008, p.27). The EU did not formulate any similar policies, although the European Commission did not maintain any contact with the Radicals. As an official of the European Commission (Interview 2011) explained, 'the European Commission primarily reacts on a reactive basis and does not have an active policy towards approaching the Radicals'. Former G17 Plus MP and secretary-general of the NGO European Movement, Ksenija Milivojević (2007, p.110), also revealed that the EU refused to communicate with the Serbian Radical Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia in the mid-2000s, since these parties were not reformed and continued to support the policies of Milošević's regime. She further specified that, during the 2004-2007 parliament term, EU's institutions did not co-operate with the so-

called ‘anti-European forces’, while the Serbian Radical Party refused to send its representatives during visits of the Serbian parliament’s delegations to EU member states. Neither did the Radicals ever request a meeting with officials of the European Commission. Former deputy president of the Radicals’ parliamentary group, Aleksandar Martinović (Interview 2011), explained that this was because ‘the European Commission provides direct support to pro-European parties in Serbia’. The Radicals thus mostly boycotted the meetings with the European Commission and the European Parliament’s delegation during their regular visits to the Serbian parliament (EC official, Interview 2011). As a European People’s Party MEP, Doris Pack (Interview 2011), put it, ‘the Radicals did not want to be convinced. I did not want to lose my time. Their representatives were sometimes present at the meetings, but I do not think that they were listening’. The cases of the Democratic Party of Serbia and the Serbian Radical Party thus demonstrate the importance of specific motivations in a party’s response to the EU. Both parties expressed strong, principled opposition to the EU, and not only were they not susceptible to EU influence, they also pursued policies of either boycotting or deliberately distancing themselves from EU institutions and officials.

On the other hand, foreign governments, represented by their ambassadors to Serbia, proved to be an important factor that impacted some parties’ policies and stances on the EU. Their general influence on domestic party politics appeared to be unusually strong in Serbia, particularly in the case of pragmatic parties that did not have firm ideological positions on the EU. This may have contributed to the weak institutions, fragmented party system and political elites that generally did not pursue principled politics based on the clear set of fundamental values. This, in turn, created conditions for foreign ambassadors to take the role of key external ‘veto players’ that were often in a position to significantly affect the outcomes of political processes in the country. The 2008 post-election government formation process appeared to be one such moment when foreign ambassadors played an important role.

It was, specifically, then-US ambassador Cameron Munter that took initiative to shape the result of the early elections at the height of the Kosovo crisis in mid-2008 and importantly ‘persuade’ the Socialist Party of Serbia to shift its stance on the EU. As Krlev (2012, p.3) argued, Munter had helped behind the scenes to engineer the election loss of former Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica, after evidence emerged that he had approved an attack that burned down the US Embassy in Belgrade following Washington’s

recognition of Kosovo's independence. As Kralev argued, Munter determined that the key to weakening Koštunica's re-election chances was taking away the support of the Socialist Party of Serbia. In other words, the US intention to 'punish a disobedient' prime minister that stubbornly refused to accept the *fait accompli* policy of an independent Kosovo, as well as to strengthen more co-operative pro-EU forces, led to direct US pressure on the Socialists. As previously explained, this party had already begun the process of transformation, but the US role in the post-2008 election crucially contributed to its decision to fully reorient and form a government with a long-term political foe, the traditionally pro-EU Democratic Party. The Socialist leader, Ivica Dačić, interested in obtaining international legitimacy, was susceptible to foreign influences and, as Munter argued:

We got him to flip over and join the pro-Europeans. We didn't pay him off, we just persuaded him. What he really wanted was international legitimacy. [...] They [José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and George Papandreou] told him they would let him in [to the Socialist International] if he joined the pro-European forces, and he did. He put a knife in Koštunica's back. (see Kralev 2012)

This therefore points not only to the important role of Western ambassadors, but also to the fact that legitimacy obtained by securing international affiliations was an important factor in the transformation of formerly nationalist and Eurosceptic parties in Serbia. The role of ambassadors, particularly in the fundamental reorientation of the Serbian Socialists, was recognised by a number of the interviewed country experts. Political analyst and journalist Željko Cvijanović (Interview 2011), for example, stressed that there was no doubt that ambassadors were an extremely important driver of party policies on the EU and that Serbia became 'a banana republic'. President of the leading Serbian NGO Civic Initiatives, Miljenko Dereta (Interview 2011), stressed that foreign diplomats were very important in the formation of parties' policies in Serbia. Stojiljković (2008, p.494) concluded that foreign actors played an extremely important role in the Serbian party system, since they directly and indirectly favoured certain parties, coalitions and leaders as well as impacted upon their policies and stances. The Democratic Party of Serbia's vice president, Samardžić (Interview 2011), also argued that the 'foreign factor fully interfered in the making of the 2008 government. They converted Dačić and his party, which was a big surprise to us. It was actually quite a big surprise that they interfered to such an extent'. In 2012, Dačić himself did not deny claims that Moscow pressured him to form a government with the Progressives, adding that there was strong pressure coming from the other side

(the West), too. He explained that in 2008 the representatives of Western countries called on him to support the government of the Democratic Party (B92 2012c).

## 7.5 Conclusion

There have been few studies in the comparative literature that systematically investigated the patterns of party transnational and bilateral linkages as a factor that may shape the responses of contemporary parties to Europe. This chapter specifically aimed to do so, by conducting a comparative analysis of the positions of Serbian and Croatian parties on European integration in relation to their international affiliations, but also bilateral relations with foreign parties, foreign governments and EU institutions. The key empirical and conceptual findings are summarised in the following section.

Data collected through a series of interviews with senior officials of the European transnational and Serbian/Croatian parties suggest that European party federations regularly checked the programmatic EU commitments of their (potential) members, which proved to be the key precondition for deepening or developing any meaningful relations with national parties from (potential) EU candidate countries. They specifically analysed national parties' programmatic documents, and scrutinised their politics and rhetoric against certain requirements and standards – which, however, were often not clearly spelled out in the documents of European transnational parties. They were also closely scrutinised according to a set of democratic principles (democratic conditionality), as well as 'post-Yugoslav principles', which entailed their relations with neighbouring former Yugoslav parties and their overall position on the legacy and consequences of the post-Yugoslav wars.

Nevertheless, it was generally more difficult to directly trace back changes in party stances on the EU to the requirements of European transnational party federations. Specifically, regarding the direct and indirect impact model employed in this study, the chapter found that the former was rather limited given the lack of the clear requirements of European transnational party federations, particularly in relation to national parties' attitudes towards the substance of European integration. In other words, the chapter was unable to detect any programmatic adaptations that may be seen as a result of the impact of European transnational party federations, except in the case of the Social Democratic Party in Croatia, which appeared to have adopted 'opposition to a Europe of unbridled capital and support for a Europe of social solidarity' (SDP 2007a) induced by the Party of European

Socialists. When it came to national parties' attitudes towards EU membership, European transnational party federations mostly did not formally require their members to express an affirmative programmatic stance on this issue, even though in reality they carefully monitored parties' pro-EU commitment. Neither has any indirect impact been identified in the majority of parties. This seeming lack of influence may be due to the fact that national parties formed their stances on the EU long before joining European party federations. European transnational parties did not, therefore, have motives or reasons to influence their (potential) members on this issue, with the few notable exceptions of former Eurosceptic (and therefore 'suspicious') parties, which were closely scrutinised and somewhat influenced in this regard, as presented in Table 7.2.

The chapter found some empirical evidence that supports the hypothesis H5a that *the stronger parties' linkages with European transnational party federations and national parties from EU member states, the less likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. In other words, hard Eurosceptic parties did not have international affiliations, while hard Euroenthusiastic parties were the leading members of European transnational party federations in the Western Balkans and had strong bilateral relations with other national parties (Table 7.2). However, this chapter argued that party stances on the EU were in most cases not the result of international party linkages, but rather the opposite: their stances on the EU appear to have had significant effects on their international relations. In other words, parties that became associate members of European transnational party federations in the mid-2000s and maintained close bilateral relations with similar parties from the EU had formed pro-European stances long before they joined transnational parties (see, for example, the Liberal Democratic Party, G17 Plus, Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party and Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats). Membership in European transnational party federations was rather a consequence than a cause of their initial firmly established and consistently pro-European orientation.

Similarly, Euroscepticism (particularly the hard Euroscepticism) precluded parties with such stances from having transnational relations, while their bilateral relations with similar parties from the EU also tended to be limited and scarce. They expressed no intentions to join European transnational party federations (see the Serbian Radical Party), or following an unsuccessful attempt to join, expressed no further interest in doing so (the Croatian Party of Rights), or withdrew from membership after adopting a policy of opposition to Serbian EU membership (the Democratic Party of Serbia). This thesis therefore found that



the role of transnational and bilateral linkages was rather limited in the majority of Serbian and Croatian parties that appear to have formed stances on the EU based on their fundamental ideological principles, regardless of their international affiliations. They did not pragmatically compromise or modify their positive/negative positions on the EU for the sake of the gains that may have resulted from cooperation with European counterparts or European transnational party federations.

This chapter, however, found that transnational and bilateral party linkages can account for the strategically driven stances on the EU of former Eurosceptic parties that abandoned such a position and reoriented themselves towards the pro-European pole. They appear to have been motivated, to a large degree, by a strong intention to break away from long-term international isolation, establish contacts with mainstream European parties and join one of the European transnational party federations in order to obtain European legitimacy. Although it was difficult to assess whether this was the cause of a party shift or a consequence of a previous decision to change, data strongly suggested that it was one of the crucial drivers of change in the case of the Croatian Democratic Union as well as an important factor that contributed to the transformation of the Socialist Party of Serbia, New Serbia and the Serbian Progressive Party. Party transnational and bilateral linkages were thus an important factor at an early stage of the strategically motivated transformation of former Eurosceptic parties towards being credible, mainstream and pro-European parties. Additionally, the strategic decision of European transnational parties to spread their membership and widen their influence in new regions proved important, as demonstrated in the case of the European People's Party, which did not have members from the Western Balkans until the Croatian Democratic Union transformed and joined it.

The data considered here provide some support for the hypothesis H5b that *the stronger parties' linkages with EU institutions and foreign governments, the less likely it is that parties will adopt Eurosceptic attitudes*. This chapter found that parties with principled and ideologically driven enthusiastic or sceptic positions on the EU were rather unreceptive to the influences of EU institutions and foreign governments (for example, the Democratic Party of Serbia, the Serbian Radical Party), while there was evidence that this was an important factor that impacted the positions of strategically motivated parties (the Socialist Party of Serbia) or parties that did not have firm stance on the EU (New Serbia). However, the leverage of EU institutions was rather indirect and most visible in the fact that EU officials did not maintain contacts with Eurosceptic parties, which may be seen as an unofficial policy of

isolation of such parties. Moreover, the EU effectively blocked hard Eurosceptic parties from government participation in these countries, which significantly contributed to the transformation of some of them, particularly the Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia.

At the same time, foreign governments, represented by their ambassadors, particularly in Serbia, proved to be an important factor that impacted upon the policies and stances of some strategically motivated political parties, as demonstrated in the case of the Socialist Party of Serbia. It appears that a reorientation towards a pro-EU position of former Eurosceptic core Serbian parties was in the interest of Western governments that, at the same time, broke all contact with the Democratic Party of Serbia following the party's adoption of a policy of opposition to Serbian EU membership. Foreign influence on domestic party politics seemed to be rather strong in Serbia, which was due to the weak state institutions, fragmented party system as well as political elites that generally did not pursue principled politics based on a clear set of fundamental values. This created conditions for foreign ambassadors to take the role of key 'external veto players' that were often in a position to significantly affect the outcomes of political processes in the country.

## Chapter 8: Conclusions and implications

'Europe' has never been an easy issue for political parties and their voters in Serbia, Croatia and the other successor states of the former Yugoslavia (Massari 2005; Jović 2006; Stojić 2010, 2013; Konitzer 2011). This was due to the fact that all the crucial political and social contradictions as well as the key statehood and identity dilemmas, which have dominated the public realms of these countries more than twenty years after the fall of communism and violent breakup of the common country, have been neatly reflected in the notion of 'Europe'. Moreover, there are very few countries in Europe that have experienced such dramatic developments in their relationships with the EU and internal politics over the last two decades. These two countries have undergone dynamic and contradictory relationships with the EU, ranging from armed conflict with the majority of EU member states to the membership negotiations in the Serbian case, and from unofficial isolation to becoming a fully-fledged EU member in the case of Croatia. At the same time, the domestic political scenes in both countries have endured the full force of the difficulties related to the transformation of post-communist and post-conflict societies, including facing the legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars, the secession of Kosovo, mass protests that ousted the autocratic president and the assassination of the prime minister in Serbia, as well as major corruption scandals and imprisonment of the prime minister in Croatia. It was under these circumstances that political parties in these countries formed and shifted their broad, underlying attitudes towards the EU and their countries' membership in the Union.

This thesis aimed to provide insight into how political parties in Serbia and Croatia responded to the significant challenges brought by European integration since the 2000 democratic changes. Conceptualised as a comparative qualitative study of two party systems, the dissertation specifically sought to: (i) identify and categorise the broad, underlying stances on the EU of relevant parties in both countries, and (ii) answer the central research question of why and how political parties in these countries adopted or changed their positions on the substance of the European integration and their countries' EU membership. The study was broadly grounded in the literature on the domestic politics of European integration (Taggart 1998; Sitter 2001; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2002; Batory 2008a, 2008b; Henderson 2008; Sitter and Batory 2008), although it also relied on the more

general party politics literature (Sartori 1990; Katz and Mair 1995) and, to a lesser extent, the EU conditionality literature (Vachudova 2005; Konitzer 2011).

The thesis sought to: (i) make a major new empirical contribution to our knowledge of party positions on the EU, and (ii) move forward the theoretical scholarly debate on party stances on the EU. Given that there is very little known about Serbian and Croatian parties, the thesis made a significant empirical contribution by looking systematically and comparatively at two new and under-researched, yet empirically rich, cases. It did so by using an original and fresh dataset compiled through an extensive set of interviews with senior party officials, country experts, and officials of the EU and European transnational party federations as well as a qualitative content analysis of parties' programmatic documents. The thesis also aimed to make a theoretical contribution by using a new set of cases to test, amend and develop the literature on party positions on the EU. Specifically, it sought to advance this strand of the literature by looking comparatively at the individual impact of five factors as well as the interaction between them, with an aim to disentangle their causal effect. By looking at the explanatory factors stemming from the domestic and EU levels and how they interrelate, the thesis also aimed to make a contribution to the literature on the EU's impact on member and candidate states. Finally, the thesis sought to advance the literature on Central and Eastern European politics by identifying and classifying the ideological positions of Serbian and Croatian parties and discussing the transformation of some parties' ideologies and stances on the EU.

In order to understand the underlying motives behind party stances on Europe, the thesis explored the effect of five explanatory variables. These were: (i) party ideology and identity; (ii) party strategy and tactics; (iii) position within the party system; (iv) relations with electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups; and (v) transnational and bilateral party linkages. It analysed the extent to which party attitudes towards the EU could be attributed to each of these factors, examined in the significant context of the domestic political contestation across these countries, their post-conflict and post-communist transformation as well as their peculiar role as the latecomers to the process of European integration (see Chapter 1). It also aimed to understand how the European issue played out through these party systems and how individual parties used 'Europe' in domestic political contestation.

The key arguments of the thesis are twofold. First, party ideology was the factor that decisively influenced the formation of party stances on the EU, despite the fact that the majority of the parties analysed were not ideologically grounded (as discussed later in this chapter). Second, under a set of specific conditions pertaining to the political milieu of (potential) candidate countries, former nationalist and Eurosceptic parties fundamentally shifted their ideologies and long-term positions on the EU, motivated by strategic electoral incentives stemming from the logic of domestic party systems and external stimuli. The other independent variables examined (position within the party system, relations with electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups, transnational and bilateral party linkages) generally proved to be of secondary importance for the formation of the parties' underlying stances on the EU. The effect of these variables was mostly mediated through party ideology and strategy, as the two most important drivers of party positions. However, these factors exerted considerable influence on how parties used 'Europe' as an issue in domestic party competition.

This concluding chapter summarises the most important findings of the thesis by discussing each of the explanatory variables examined as well as interactions between them. It also discusses the key general findings of the thesis, draws implications for the comparative literature from the Serbian and Croatian cases, and proposes avenues for further research.

## **8.1 Summary of the key findings**

This section recapitulates the key arguments from the previous chapters. It first discusses the classification model applied to map the positions of Serbian and Croatian parties on the EU. This section then summarises the effects of each of the independent variables, their interaction, as well as how their combined impact may have determined parties' underlying positions on the substance of the European integration.

### **8.1.1 Conceptualising and classifying party stances on the EU**

The conceptualisation and classification of party stances on the EU remains one of the most contentious issues in the comparative literature, which consequently led to fundamental disagreement about the nature of individual parties that have been differently classified by various authors (Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2002; Flood and Usherwood 2007). This dissertation has encountered a key problem when

attempting to group Serbian and Croatian parties – namely, that all classification frameworks (with the exception of the initial Szczerbiak-Taggart model) required parties' nuances and differentiated stances on the issue of Europe to be operationalised (see Chapter 2). For instance, it was very difficult to clearly identify party viewpoints on 'the ideas of European integration', on one hand, and 'the EU as the current embodiment of these ideas', on the other (Kopecký and Mudde 2002, p.30), which was the underlying logic of the most extensively used concepts. This was a significant obstacle since general knowledge about the EU among party elites and the public in Serbia and Croatia was very low (certainly lower than in EU member states). A number of interviews with senior party officials conducted in 2011 indicated a high level of ignorance among both Serbian and Croatian political elites despite the Croatian secured EU accession. Moreover, the nature of the debate on the EU was fundamentally different compared to member states. It was not only too general and couched in terms of political conditions for EU membership, but was essentially conducted through proxy issues, such as the status of Kosovo, the legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars and cooperation with the ICTY.

Nevertheless, the thesis has classified the broad, underlying positions of Serbian and Croatian parties on the substance of the European integration into four categories: hard and soft Euroscepticism, and hard and soft Euroenthusiasm, which were elaborated in Chapter 2. The applied model, combining the existing classification frameworks, was conceptualised as a simple, clear-cut, ordinal axis of dynamic party stances towards the substance of European integration, ranging from principled support to principled opposition, with the contingent positive and negative stances located between these two poles. The classification of individual Serbian and Croatian parties according to the model applied in this thesis is presented in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Party positions on Europe in Serbia and Croatia

Sources: Adapted Conti (2003)/Rovny (2004)/Szczepiak and Taggart (2008b)

Hard Euroenthusiasm	Soft Euroenthusiasm	Soft Euroscepticism	Hard Euroscepticism
<i>Principled pro-integration</i>	<i>Contingent pro-integration</i>	<i>Contingent anti-integration</i>	<i>Principled anti-integration</i>
<b>SERBIA</b>			
- Democratic Party - G17 Plus (United Regions of Serbia) - Liberal Democratic Party	- Serbian Progressive Party - Socialist Party of Serbia	- Democratic Party of Serbia - New Serbia	- Serbian Radical Party - <i>Socialist Party of Serbia until mid-2000s</i>
<b>CROATIA</b>			
- Social Democratic Party - Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats	- Croatian Democratic Union	- Croatian Peasants' Party	- Croatian Party of Rights - <i>Croatian Democratic Union until early-2000s</i>

Starting from a Euroenthusiastic category, five political parties were classified as hard Euroenthusiasts: the Democratic Party, G17 Plus and the Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia, as well as the Social Democratic Party and the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats in Croatia. These parties consistently expressed a principled pro-integration position by strongly supporting their countries' EU membership, while some of them also expressed a relatively elaborated support for European integration in principle. These were also parties that have, unlike the majority of other parties, crystallised over the years their ideological profiles (see Chapter 3). They therefore appear to have been ideologically grounded, and their responses to the EU were largely ideologically motivated. This was the case with the Liberal Democratic Party, Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats and the Social Democratic Party of Croatia. In contrast, the Democratic Party and G17 Plus seem to have been more pragmatic and strategically driven as well as weakly ideologically profiled. These parties nevertheless adopted principled Euroenthusiasm as a core element of their overall identity and 'world view' (although not related to any firmly rooted ideology). As such, they served as prime examples of essentially strategically driven parties that expressed principled positions on the EU (as discussed in Chapter 2).

Three core parties were classified as strategically driven soft Euroenthusiasts: the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union. The central characteristic of these parties is political pragmatism. They all underwent a fundamental ideological transformation and shifted their underlying attitudes towards the

EU, primarily driven by strategic electoral considerations (see Chapter 4). Pragmatism was particularly an important trait of the Serbian Progressive Party, which lacked any ideological convictions, while its newly founded enthusiasm for European integration was clearly couched in instrumental and utilitarian terms. On the other side, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union adopted more elaborated ideological principles. However, there was limited evidence that these parties, with a pronounced Eurosceptic political legacy, fully embraced European values and that their soft Europeanism was a reflection of deeper ideological beliefs, particularly in the case of the Serbian Socialists.

Moving to a Eurosceptic category, the Serbian Radical Party and the Croatian Party of Rights, as well as a number of peripheral parties (Dveri, the Croatian Pure Party of Rights, the Autochthon Croatian Party of Rights, Only Croatia) were classified as hard Eurosceptic. What characterised these parties was their radical right ideology (somewhat moderated in the case of the Croatian Party of Rights), which predisposed and strongly shaped their principled opposition to the substance of European integration as well as their countries' EU membership. Given that the principles of supranational cooperation and the values underpinning the EU run essentially counter to their nativist and nationalist identity, these parties expressed ideologically driven, hard Euroscepticism. It was also argued that these were in general mostly ideologically based parties, strongly driven by their far-right positions on identity issues (with fully underdeveloped stances on socio-economic issues).

Finally, there were three relevant parties in both countries classified as soft Eurosceptic: the Croatian Peasants' Party, the Democratic Party of Serbia and New Serbia. The first two parties developed ideologically based soft Eurosceptic positions, whereas New Serbia appeared to be more strategically driven (although ideology did play an important role in party positioning on this issue). Their traditionalist and national ideologies strongly related to identity and statehood issues (with socio-economic issues being in the background), which predisposed these parties to adopt sceptic (although not rejectionist) attitudes toward the EU and consequent contingent opposition to it. The Democratic Party of Serbia was a prime example of ideologically motivated positioning on the EU. The party's attitude towards the EU was a reflection of its deep ideological convictions. As a predominantly policy-seeking party, it ignored strategic electoral incentives to temper pronounced Euroscepticism since 2008, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 6.



The concept applied in this thesis is a reflection of the argument that party ideology and strategy were the two decisive drivers of their responses to Europe. It thus enabled distinguishing between the parties, which were to a lesser or greater extent motivated by these factors, depending on their inherent qualities (policy-seeking or office-/vote-seeking). The thesis specifically argues that it is important to differentiate between and examine three distinct indicators in order to classify party stances on the EU and identify driving forces behind them, as outlined in Table 8.2. The first indicator is parties' inherent qualities, given that they may be generally more strategically or ideologically driven when adopting their key stances. The second indicator is the extent to which parties are ideologically profiled – that is, they have the varied levels of defined and coherent ideological underpinnings related to socio-economic and identity issues in their programmatic documents and key policies. The third indicator is the extent to which party positions on the EU are predominately strategically or ideologically motivated.

Table 8.2: Party characteristics and sources of their attitudes towards the EU

*Sources:* Party programmes and interviews with party officials

SERBIA								
	Democratic Party	G17 Plus (United Regions of Serbia)	Liberal Democratic Party	Serbian Progressive Party	Socialist Party of Serbia	Democratic Party of Serbia	New Serbia	Serbian Radical Party
Ideologically or strategically driven in general	Strategically driven	Strategically driven	More ideologically driven	Strategically driven	Strategically driven	Ideologically driven (focus on identity issues)	More strategically driven	Ideologically driven (absolute focus on identity issues)
Having a clear and coherent ideological underpinning related to socio- economic left- right and identity issues (Ideological profile)	Socio-economic left-right: No Identity: Yes	Socio-economic left-right: less coherent since the formation of the United Regions of Serbia Identity: Yes	Socio-economic left-right: Yes Identity: Yes	Socio-economic left-right: No Identity: No	Socio-economic left-right: Yes Identity: Yes	Socio-economic left-right: To some extent Identity: Yes	Socio-economic left-right: To some extent Identity: Yes	Socio-economic left-right: No Identity: Yes
Ideologically or strategically driven position on the EU	Ideologically driven	Ideologically driven	Ideologically driven	Strategically driven	Strategically driven	Ideologically driven	More strategically driven	Ideologically driven
CROATIA								
	Social Democratic Party		Croatian People's Party- Liberal Democrats		Croatian Democratic Union	Croatian Peasants' Party		Croatian Party of Rights
Ideologically or strategically driven in general	More ideologically driven		More ideologically driven		More strategically driven	More ideologically driven		More ideologically driven (absolute focus on identity issues)
Having a clear and coherent ideological underpinning related to socio-economic left - right and identity issues (Ideological profile)	Socio-economic left-right: Yes Identity: Yes		Socio-economic left-right: Yes Identity: Yes		Socio-economic left-right: To a great extent Identity: Yes	Socio-economic left-right: To a great extent Identity: Yes		Socio-economic left-right: To some extent (underdeveloped) Identity: Yes
Ideologically or strategically driven position on the EU	Ideologically driven		Ideologically driven		More strategically driven	More ideologically driven		Ideologically driven

Table 8.2 presents Serbian and Croatian parties in relation to these three indicators. First, as elaborated in Chapter 3, most Serbian parties were predominantly strategically driven, whereas Croatian parties appear to have been relatively more ideologically driven in general terms. However, it is difficult to precisely differentiate between these two motivations and particularly to claim that parties were strongly ideologically driven, given the tendency of almost all parties to act pragmatically and strategically. This was mostly the consequence of the general lack of social ‘rootedness’ of these parties, due to politically unarticulated interests of the distinct social and economic groups that these parties sought to represent as well as weak linkages between parties and these groups (as discussed in Chapter 3). Second, regarding ideological profiling, all the parties in these countries expressed clear and coherent positions in relation to identity issues, whereas parties’ fundamental principles related to socio-economic issues were less developed and elaborated (primarily in Serbia). Therefore, very few parties (the Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia, the Social Democratic Party in Croatia) adopted clearly identifiable ideological concepts that were consistent and coherent in both socio-economic and identity terms (analogous to West European party families). Third and most important for this analysis, the majority of parties appear to have adopted ideologically motivated attitudes towards the EU, as outlined in Table 8.2.

What is important to notice, however, is the lack of direct linear relationship between parties’ intrinsic characteristics, their profiling and stances on the EU. In other words, in most cases parties that were generally ideologically or strategically driven also expressed stances on the EU motivated by the same drivers, respectively (see, for example, the Democratic Party of Serbia, Social Democratic Party of Croatia and Serbian Progressive Party in Table 8.2). However, some parties (the Democratic Party and G17 Plus/United Regions of Serbia) that appeared essentially pragmatic and strategically driven nevertheless expressed ideologically motivated positions on the EU (although not related to any particular ideology, given their changing ideological nature). Similarly, the fact that parties adopted elaborated and coherent ideological concepts did not necessarily mean that they were ideologically driven, both in general terms and in relation to the EU (as was the case with the Socialist Party of Serbia and, to some extent, the Croatian Democratic Union). Finally, Table 8.2 also indicates that for ideologically driven responses to Europe, parties’ positions on identity issues were crucial. Specifically, ideologically motivated attitudes towards the EU were expressed by parties with strong and firm stances on identity issues (which was a consequence of the nature of EU issues in these countries, as discussed in

Chapter 3). In contrast, parties' attitudes towards the EU appeared largely unrelated to their stances on socio-economic issues, given that they were not fully crystallised (the Democratic Party) or given parties' absolute emphasis on identity issues (the Democratic Party of Serbia, Serbian Radical Party, Croatian Party of Rights).

### **8.1.2 The relation between the dependent and independent variables**

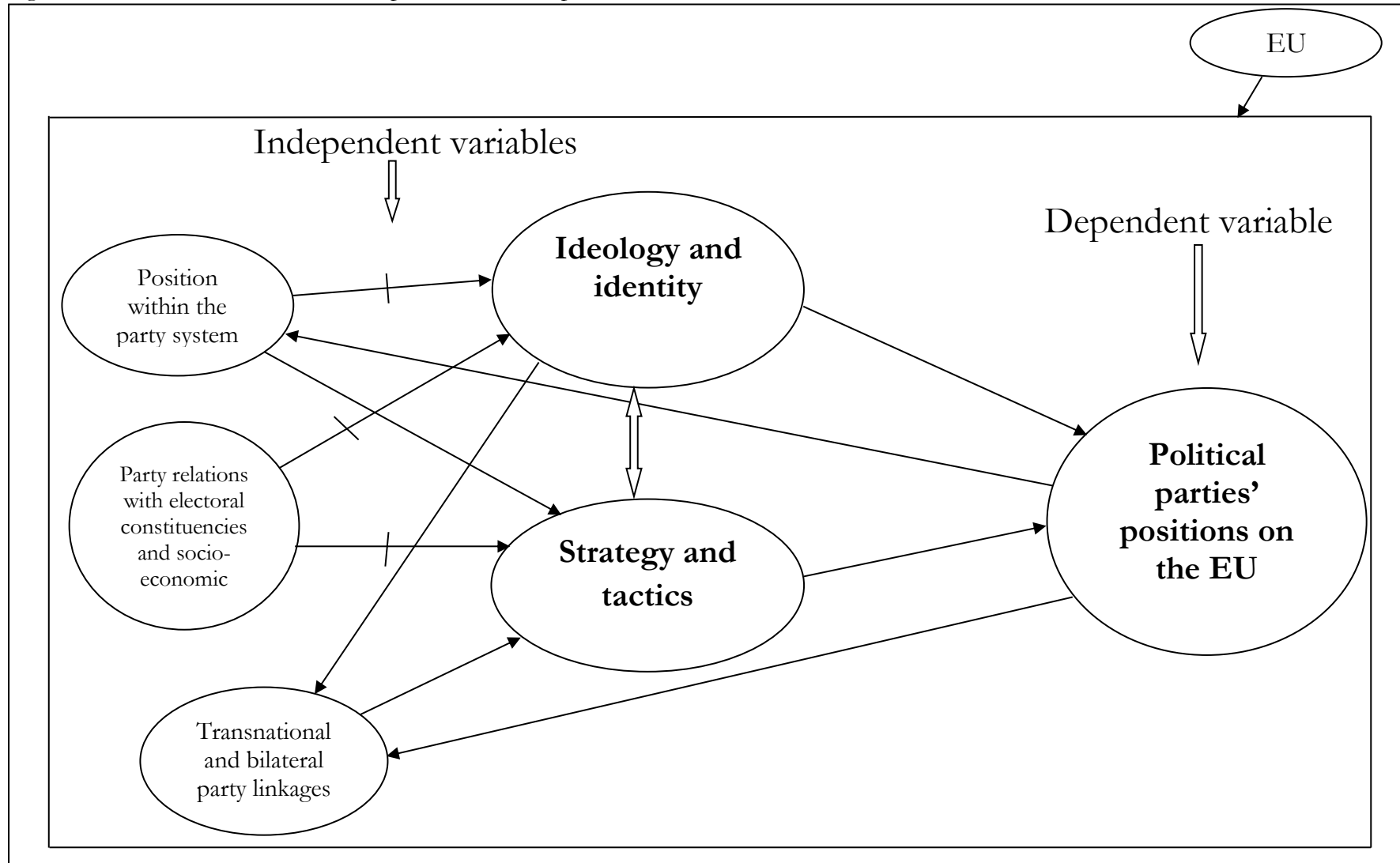
This section discusses the effect and the interaction between the factors that shaped party responses to Europe. Figure 8.1 schematically outlines the observed relation between the dependent and five independent variables. As discussed in the previous section, party ideology and strategy proved to be the key driving forces behind parties' positions on Europe. Ideology was the key factor that impacted and shaped the formation of EU stances of a large majority of parties across both countries. On the other hand, a relatively small group of mainstream parties approached the EU pragmatically and fundamentally shifted both their ideologies and positions on the EU, motivated by strategic internal electoral incentives and external pressures. Other factors generally proved to be of secondary importance for ideologically motivated parties, while they were somewhat important for those that were strategically driven. Moreover, as shown in Figure 8.1, there were some reverse links between these variables, namely that party ideology and stances on the EU significantly affected parties' international affiliations and their position in the party system, as elaborated later in this chapter.

As Figure 8.1 suggests, party ideology proved to be the single most important determinant and source of motivation for Serbian and Croatian parties' response to Europe. It was also the factor that exerted the greatest independent impact on party stances and policies on this issue. In other words, parties with ideologically motivated positions, unlike those that were strategically driven, were not significantly influenced by the other factors examined, such as public opinion, core voter preferences on the EU, international affiliations, or position in the party system. Support for or opposition to the EU appear to have become, in most cases, an element of their identities and they were rather consistent in advocating these stances and implementing consequent policies. This was observed in the cases of the pro-European Liberal Democratic Party in Serbia and the Social Democratic Party and the Croatian People's Party-Liberal Democrats in Croatia, as well as the hard Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party and Croatian Party of Rights. The thesis also found that the soft Eurosceptic Democratic Party of Serbia and Croatian Peasants' Party also held

predominantly ideologically motivated viewpoints and policies on the EU, as demonstrated in Chapter 3.

Although the majority of Serbian and some Croatian parties generally had loose ideological underpinnings (Table 8.2), the specific nature of European issues in the context of these post-communist and post-conflict societies triggered mostly ideologically driven responses to Europe. As discussed in Chapter 3, the key prerequisites for European integration of these countries were related to crucial state-building and identity issues, such as the status of Kosovo and related territorial integrity, cooperation with the ICTY, regional cooperation, reconciliation, and overall attitudes towards the legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars. Given the nature of these questions and their significance, these parties tended to adopt mostly ideologically driven stances on the EU. However, party preferences on the traditional socio-economic left-right axis were not translated into specific stances on the EU. This was due to the fact that these parties did not compete on this dimension, faced with the lack of politically articulated social and economic interests of distinct social groups. Parties tended to be clustered near the left socio-economic pole; consequently, they did not perceive the EU in social-economic terms. Instead, parties that formulated ideologically motivated stances did so predominantly based on their attitudes towards national and identity issues – i.e., their location on the dominant nationalism (nativism) versus cosmopolitanism dimension. Support for and opposition to the EU was, therefore, the result of the content of party competition, and it essentially reflected the dominant pattern of domestic politics in both countries.

Figure 8.1: The relation between the dependent and independent variables



On the other hand, party strategy proved to be an important factor in three ways, as discussed in Chapter 4. First, the thesis identified a group of former hard Eurosceptic parties that appear to have developed strategically motivated positions on the substance of European integration. Specifically, the Serbian Progressive Party, the Socialist Party of Serbia and the Croatian Democratic Union were pragmatic and loosely ideologically grounded parties (particularly the Serbian Progressive Party). Their approach to the EU and EU membership was tactically and contextually driven, and, as such, couched in instrumental terms. Their attitudes to the EU appear not to have been a component of their wider ideology, and European integration was predominantly a tool for implementing their key goal, namely voter maximisation. Second, these parties have undergone fundamental ideological transformations, which included, as the most visible element, the full shift of stances on the EU from hard Eurosceptic to soft Euroenthusiastic. This volte-face was a strategically driven response to internal and external incentives in the context of dynamic electoral competition and a strong EU presence in (potential) candidate countries, aimed at maximising the chances of securing executive office. The key strategic factors that framed their newly founded Euroenthusiastic perception were: the perceived beneficial effects of EU integration for party voters, disincentives to compete on the Eurosceptic space that was already ‘occupied’ by stronger political competitors, and aspirations to become ‘suitable coalition partners’ for dominant pro-European parties. Third, strategic considerations affected how all parties translated and used EU issues in domestic party competition, including those that were mostly ideologically driven.

Given that these office- and vote-seeking parties did not have firm positions on the EU, their stances and policies were also shaped somewhat by the other factors examined, namely their position in the party system and relations with European transnational parties; surprisingly, there was limited influence of general public opinion and core voters’ preferences, as outlined in Figure 8.1. In other words, they responded to European integration strategically and pragmatically, aiming to maximise chances of coming to power, but also as a result of repeated failed attempts to come to power advocating anti-Europeanism (opposition status), the significant (although indirect) pressure of the EU and foreign ambassadors, as well as an aspiration to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the West by joining a mainstream European party federation.

Chapter 5 sought to determine whether and how party involvement in government and opposition status, as well as core and peripheral positions, impacted party responses to European integration. It found that these were not generally driving forces behind underlying party stances on the substance of the European integration. Ideologically driven parties formed and maintained their stances on the EU irrespective of their location in the party system. It was rather the opposite, as Figure 8.1 shows: parties' stances on the EU affected their position in the party system, with hard Eurosceptic parties being excluded from government and mostly occupying the political periphery. However, the thesis also found that opposition status contributed significantly to the adoption of a Euroenthusiastic political agenda by strategically motivated formerly Eurosceptic parties, as depicted in Figure 8.1. These parties initiated their transformations while all being in opposition as a result of 'political ostracism', losing elections for the first time, or fearing long-term opposition status after many unsuccessful attempts to form a government. The thesis also argued that different types of party systems in Serbia and Croatia created different opportunities for parties to express Eurosceptic or Euroenthusiastic sentiments, with a highly fragmented and polarised pluralistic system in Serbia being more conducive to the sharp contestation of EU issues and consequently the emergence of more pronounced Euroscepticism.

Surprisingly, the thesis found that in most cases based on the available data, there was no direct link between party and public/core voters' stances on the EU, as discussed in Chapter 6. In general, political parties, including those that were strategically motivated, tended to ignore and did not respond to public and core voters' preferences on the EU in these countries. This was due primarily to the weak, unarticulated impulses coming from the public and their core voters, which consequently left considerable space for parties to manoeuvre on this issue. The EU was generally a 'difficult issue' for voters of the majority of (particularly Serbian) parties, who had difficulties expressing their definite views given Serbia's contradictory relations with the EU, the lack of wider political consensus on EU membership, and the outstanding identity and statehood issues directly related to EU conditionality. The thesis also found that, while trade unions, non-governmental organisations and churches across both countries exerted a very limited impact on the formation of party preferences on the EU, parties appear to have been affected considerably by the economic interests of financial and lobby groups.



Finally, party transnational and bilateral linkages did not generally have a direct effect on party attitudes towards the EU, and their impact was rather mediated through party ideology and strategy. Specifically, this factor proved to be irrelevant for parties that appeared to have ideologically driven stances on the EU. They either had no intention to become members of European transnational parties and had rare bilateral contacts with foreign parties (the hard Eurosceptic Serbian Radical Party and Croatian Party of Rights) or had formed stances long before joining European party federations (such as hard Euroenthusiastic parties). Instead, as shown in Figure 8.1, a pro-EU agenda and moderate ideology had a significant effect on the parties' transitional relations given that these were a key precondition for parties to develop meaningful international affiliations. On the other hand, this factor may have accounted for the strategically driven stances on the EU of a group of former Eurosceptic parties that reoriented towards the pro-European pole. They were largely motivated by a strong aspiration to break away from their long-term international isolation, establish contacts with mainstream European parties and join one of the European party federations in order to obtain European legitimacy and, crucially, the possibility to participate in government, given the significant veto power of these external actors. Similar patterns of behaviour between ideologically and strategically motivated parties were identified regarding parties' linkages with EU institutions and foreign governments.

In summary, based on the arguments from the previous chapters, Euroscepticism in these countries predominantly emerged in parties whose hostility or scepticism towards the EU was an intrinsic element of their identity, largely irrespective of strategic electoral incentives stemming from the domestic party system, their position in the party system, international linkages or the considerations of their core voters and general public. These factors, however, reinforced or discouraged – but did not fundamentally alter – these parties' underlying Eurosceptic sentiments and also shaped the way they translated and used EU issues in domestic party competition. Similarly, soft Eurosceptic parties in these countries exhibited primarily ideologically driven scepticism that was occasionally rhetorically moderated to accommodate strategic electoral incentives. On the other hand, hard Euroenthusiastic parties in both countries consistently supported the EU and their countries' EU membership; this became an element of their overall identity, irrespective of their position in the party system, linkages with electoral constituencies or transnational relations. However, the thesis also identified soft Euroenthusiastic parties that expressed strategically motivated stances on the EU. These parties were loosely ideologically

underpinned and developed contingent support for the EU in order to maximise their chances of coming to power. Although not susceptible to the impulses coming from the general public and core voters, their position on this issue was reinforced by international isolations, their aspirations to secure international affiliations and long-term opposition status.

## **8.2 General conclusions**

Based on the previously summarised findings and data collected, this section synthesises some of the key findings and formulates the overarching arguments of the thesis. It seeks to outline the most interesting findings that reinforce or challenge the current literature as well as to draw the general implications that arise from the thesis.

### **8.2.1 Ideology, strategy and party attitudes towards the EU**

The thesis found that the traditional socio-economic left-right ideological dimension did not determine party responses to Europe, since the EU was not seen in socio-economic terms in these countries. This finding thus goes against the expectation from the part of comparative literature that argued for a strong relationship between the conventional left-right dimension and party positioning on European integration (Marks and Wilson 2000; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002). On the other hand, support for and opposition to European integration was structured by a single dimension of contestation – that is, between GAL and TAN poles, which somewhat reinforces the arguments put forward by Mark et al. (2006). It was, however, a very specific component of this dimension, namely the division between nationalism (nativism) versus cosmopolitanism, which was the key driver of party responses to Europe. Furthermore, unlike Marks, Wilson and Ray (2002), the study argued that party families were not a reliable predictor of their responses to Europe (Taggart 1998). The concept of party families itself had limited applicability in the cases examined, given the parties' slow ideological profiling and the lack of firm stances on the social and economic issues that often gave rise to many of these groupings.

Conversely, the substantial ideological transformation of former Eurosceptic parties was the result of party reaction to a set of strategic internal and external incentives. The pattern of transformation in all three cases examined (the Serbian Progressive Party, Socialist Party of Serbia and Croatian Democratic Union) was strikingly similar. Specifically, the key

internal drivers of change were both related to the domestic party system (inter-party relations) and intra-party relations (relations within the party). As discussed in Chapter 4, strategic disincentives to compete on the Eurosceptic dimension, repeated exclusion from government participation (i.e., a party's inability to form a government), or the shock of losing elections for the first time led, *inter alia*, to party transformation (see Haughton and Fisher 2008). These factors also resulted in growing discontent within the party, which impacted negatively on intra-party relations and created conditions favourable to factionalism and fundamental change. The reorientation towards the pro-EU pole was clearly a top-down process initiated by the party leadership and gradually embraced by party members (unlike core voters, in most cases). It was precisely initiated by new party leaders following the leadership change, which was one of the key drivers of change as argued by Harmel and Janda (1994). The change was the result of either the successful 'neutralisation' of Eurosceptic hard nationalist factions ('de-Miloševisation' in the Socialist Party of Serbia and 'de-Tudjmanisation' in the Croatian Democratic Union) or unsuccessful attempts to do so, due to strong resistance to change from hard-line nationalists (the Serbian Radical Party), which led to the foundation of a new moderate party (the Serbian Progressive Party) as elaborated by Konitzer (2011).

This thesis found that there was an interaction, rather than a division, between strategy and identity. It also argued that party ideology is not a fixed and static category, nor is party strategy necessarily prone to changes, as often perceived in the comparative literature (Kopecký and Mudde 2002). As shown throughout the thesis, ideology can also be a rather changeable phenomenon, particularly in the context of un-settled party systems and the lack of articulated interests of social groups. Parties do change ideology, and it may encompass a full shift of position on the EU (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b). Moreover, the transformation of ideology can often be strategically driven, as discussed in the thesis. This arguably does not happen often and parties find it difficult to do so, given the potentially high political cost and fear that core voters would not accept such a fundamental shift. However, when a set of strong strategic incentives comes into play, parties may embark upon ideological transformation. This is likely to happen in the case of predominantly office- and vote-seeking parties that, in general, have an instrumental approach to politics, unless they primarily seek votes and office to implement policies (Muller and Strom 1999). As a result, party ideology can be a function of political strategy, as demonstrated in the cases of the Serbian Progressive and Socialist parties.

### **8.2.2 Attitudes of political parties towards the EU and the experience of opposition**

While arguing that relative position in the party system was not generally a driving force behind underlying party stances on the substance of the European integration in Serbia and Croatia, this thesis also found that the experience of opposition contributed significantly to a fundamental ideological reorientation towards the pro-EU pole of all strategically motivated formerly Eurosceptic parties. This finding is largely against the expectation from the comparative literature that argued Euroscepticism is always ‘the politics of opposition’ (Sitter 2001) and that opposition parties, by not being directly engaged in negotiating the accession process, tend to adopt Euroscepticism as a relatively ‘costless’ stance (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001). On the other hand, this reinforces the argument put forth by Haughton and Fisher (2008, p.447), who stated that ‘transformation of the Croatian Democratic Union and the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia was driven by removal from power’, since they undertook reinvention following their removal from office.

This may be due to a number of reasons. The ‘external shock’ of losing elections (Harmel and Janda 1994) led to internal tensions between factions with opposing political agendas, since losing political power in the context of these political and party systems also meant losing access to state resources and privileges. The consequences of electoral failure were even more exacerbated in the parties not united by principles and values, but by interests and organised as an interest group, as was the case with in Serbia. If the winning faction assessed that Euroscepticism, often coupled with nationalism, was a reason for electoral defeat, the party would embark upon pro-EU reinvention. Moreover, as EU accession advanced, these parties found it increasingly difficult to maintain a Eurosceptic stance, unless it was ideologically driven. In other words, parties not involved in the process of EU accession while in opposition feared marginalisation given that political debate was centred around EU accession, and ruling parties were in a position to capitalise on their direct involvement in this process. Significantly, while in opposition these parties came to realise that, due to relatively advanced integration into the EU and the fact that the EU effectively blocked hard Eurosceptic parties from government participation, they would never come to power without becoming pro-European, as demonstrated in Chapter 4.

### **8.2.3 Attitudes of political parties, public opinion and core voters' concerns about the EU**

One of the most remarkable empirical findings of this study is the general mismatch between the stances and policies pursued by political parties, on one hand, and both public opinion and core voters' concerns on the EU, on the other. Specifically, as public Euroscepticism grew, some of the former Eurosceptic parties fundamentally shifted stances and adopted Euroenthusiastic positions, as discussed in Chapter 6. In other words, it appears that these parties did not formulate policies based on public opinion and largely the ignored impulses coming from the public. This was a rather surprising finding given that a number of scholars (Konitzer 2011; Vachudova 2012) argued for the crucial role of public opinion in parties' responses to Europe. Whereas Konitzer (2001, p.1854) specifically asserted that public support for EU accession played a crucial role in pressuring Eurosceptic parties to adopt more pro-EU stances in Serbia and Croatia, this study did not find arguments to support this claim. On the contrary, the reorientation of all three former Eurosceptic parties coincided with a sharp increase of Eurosceptic sentiments in both countries. Although Konitzer claimed, for instance, that the transformation of the Croatian Democratic Union in the early 2000s was largely driven by changes in the public mood, the empirical data actually showed a significant rise in the percentage of people who opposed Croatian EU membership at that time, from 7.9% in June 2000 to 20.3% in December 2003 (Štulhofer 2006; LSE 3013). A similar trend in the general public can be observed in 2008 and afterward in Serbia, when the Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia shifted their positions on the EU, as elaborated in Chapter 6. This thesis thus did not find support for the argument that the popularity of joining the EU among Serbia's electorate would, as Vachudova (2012) argued, compel most if not all major parties to shift their agendas to make them EU compatible. On the contrary, there was no direct link between general public and party support for the EU, particularly since 2003 in Croatia and 2008 in Serbia, when the two supports diverged. This points to an important implication of this study. Namely, this thesis argues against the tendency to draw conclusions on party stances towards the EU based on general public opinion of the Union. Public opinion on this issue appears not to be a reliable indicator when examining individual party responses to Europe. Looking at public opinion may give us only a very crude and broad picture and may not indicate how individual parties actually formulate and change their stances on the EU in relation to electoral incentives.

On the other hand, the position of a party's core voters may be a more important indicator of party stances, since parties are arguably more likely to respond to their considerations regarding Europe than the general public. This may be particularly the case with strategically driven parties that aim primarily to secure executive office. As a result, such parties are likely to be more responsive to preferences of their electoral constituencies. While other scholars did not extensively deal with the stances of core electorates as an explanatory factor, with some notable exceptions (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b), this thesis looked at attitudes towards the EU expressed by electoral constituencies. However, despite expectations, the thesis found, based on the available data, parties mostly ignored the preferences of core voters, too. This was the case even with former Eurosceptic parties in Serbia that fundamentally changed their stances and became pro-EU, clearly motivated by electoral concerns. Yet their core voters remained significantly Eurosceptic or at least had ambivalent stances, and were certainly not Euroenthusiastic, as discussed in Chapter 6. The impulses coming from core voters were weak and unarticulated, which consequently left considerable space for parties to manoeuvre on this issue and in some cases, to change stances. There was, however, a group of parties that maintained consistent positions on the EU and also had core voters that overwhelmingly expressed opinions in line with those of their parties (the Democratic Party, Liberal Democratic Party and Serbian Radical Party). Nevertheless, it was difficult to assess the significance of this relation, since this 'continuity' in stance may have also been a consequence of their ideological convictions in the EU or a combination of other explanatory factors examined – and as such formed irrespective of core voter's considerations. In summary, the rather surprising finding that strategically driven parties ignored core voter preferences on Europe indicates the need for scholars to examine this issue in more detail in order to disentangle this apparent paradox that may also exist in other contexts.

#### **8.2.4 The importance of external factors**

One of the key arguments of this thesis is that parties not only reacted to the internal impetus arising from domestic party competition, as expected and discussed in the literature (Sitter 2001; Sitter and Batory 2008), but, importantly, to the external incentives that created conditions for potentially fundamental changes in their stances on the EU. The external factors, beyond the party control, that may have had some transformative power were threefold. These were: (i) the 'veto players' – that is, EU officials and Western ambassadors; (ii) European transnational parties; and (iii) the country's level of integration

with the EU. This study therefore argued that an examination of domestic factors needs to be supplemented by an analysis of ‘external stimuli’ for change (Harmel and Janda 1994).

The concept of the ‘external veto actors’ has widely been used in the comparative, primarily EU conditionality, literature. Konitzer (2011) argued that external veto actors (i.e., the EU) played a significant role in creating pressure for Serbia and Croatian parties to adopt more pro-EU stances. Vachudova (2006, 2012) similarly claimed that major political parties respond to EU leverage by embracing agendas that are consistent with EU requirements. This thesis, however, adopted a different approach and operationalised external veto players in a more concrete way. It specifically looked at the direct linkages between officials of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and (significantly) Western ambassadors with Serbian and Croatian parties. Western ambassadors proved to be an important factor that impacted the policies and stances of some strategically motivated political parties, as demonstrated in the case of the Socialist Party of Serbia. The strong (almost transformative) influence of Western ambassadors was somewhat surprising given that the comparative literature has so far not focused on this issue. The result of this study thus indicates the importance of this variable, which should be assessed in other national contexts. On the other hand, EU institutions and officials, as expected, had a rather significant effect in the context of these countries’ European integration. The thesis thus reinforced the apparent consensus in the literature that the EU exerts considerable impact on party politics and policy preferences in (potential) candidate states.

However, whereas some scholars from the EU conditionality literature (Vachudova 2006, 2012; Konitzer 2011) seem to argue for the direct, deliberate impact on party systems and parties aimed at the transformation of Eurosceptic parties, this study found that the EU institutions did not seek to impact Eurosceptic or any other parties in this manner. In other words, there was no conditionality related to domestic party politics. As argued in Chapter 7, the European Commission specifically did not have any active policy towards these parties aimed at influencing their stances on the EU. However, this study found support for those who argued for the significance of indirect EU impact. This influence was primarily from EU policies aimed at the democratisation and stabilisation of these post-communist and post-conflict societies. Specifically, rather than intending to change Eurosceptic politicians, the EU officials appear to have sought to marginalise Eurosceptic parties whose political strength and activities would, they felt, be detrimental to the post-conflict stabilisation of the former-Yugoslav region, which was their primary concern.

The EU therefore exerted indirect influences on party-based Euroscepticism across both countries in two ways. First, it intervened effectively in government-opposition relations by blocking hard Eurosceptic parties from government participation (Kasapović 2003; Goati 2006; Henderson 2008). Given the EU's influence on mainstream Euroenthusiastic parties, these parties were effectively 'forbidden' to negotiate government formation with nationalist and hard Eurosceptic parties in these countries. Consequently, hard Eurosceptic parties were practically excluded from the government formations, which made them essentially non-coalitionable. This, therefore, crucially contributed to the pro-EU transformation of some of them. Second, the EU effectively delegitimised Euroscepticism as a political stance in these countries by pursuing an unofficial policy of international isolation of such parties, creating 'pariah' parties in international circles and aiming at their political relegation. The Serbian Radical Party, for instance, was an unacceptable coalition partner for other Serbian parties, since it has always been in unofficial isolation from Western countries and the EU (see Chapter 7).

It is, however, important to acknowledge that changes in the EU itself may have affected party positions on this issue in Serbia and Croatia. Given almost constant changes in the EU's institutional set-up as well as significant political and economic developments in its member states, the EU has always been 'a moving target' for candidate or aspirant countries. The 2008 financial and economic crisis was the most important development that fundamentally changed the context under which these countries accede to the EU. The crisis of the euro somewhat eroded the allure of the EU. For many parties in these countries, the EU ceased to be the only and unquestionable model of economic development, and the desirability of joining the EU in economic and financial terms became less obvious. Moreover, the EU itself showed reluctance to accept new member states. Driven by internal economic and political crisis, 'enlargement fatigue' plagued member states, and they subsequently became more cautious about taking new members. This therefore additionally discouraged Western Balkan political elites from implementing the reforms required for EU accession.

Under these circumstances, one may expect the rise of Eurosceptic sentiments within political elites in Serbia and Croatia. The financial and economic crisis, however, had a rather limited effect on party positioning on EU integration. It specifically did not discourage Euroenthusiasm among pro-European parties, which may indicate the nature of their predominantly ideologically driven stances. Moreover, as the crisis emerged and



spread throughout the continent in 2008, two long-term and traditionally hard Eurosceptic parties (the Socialist Party of Serbia and the leadership of the Serbian Radical Party) fundamentally shifted their position and adopted pro-EU policies. It therefore appears that developments within the EU did not significantly affect party stances on this issue and that the logic of domestic party system shaped party responses to Europe. This may be seen as a result of the lack of an informed discussion on the economic benefits and costs of EU accession in these countries. The EU was viewed in political rather than economic terms, and these parties largely ignored the causes and consequence of the crisis that plagued the continent.

The impact of the crisis was somewhat more evident in the rhetoric employed by Eurosceptic parties that used to focus their criticism primarily on negative political consequences of EU accession. However, the outbreak of the euro crisis prompted them to use it to further oppose the EU on more economic grounds. As explained by the Radicals' MP Dejan Mirović (Interview 2011), the EU is as 'an economic corpse'. He specifically underlined the experience of the 'economically failed EU member states' such as Greece, Spain or Portugal. The same may be seen in the emphasis of the Democratic Party of Serbia on the deleterious economic effects of the implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU (DSS 2012a). Similarly, Croatian Eurosceptics started pointing out 'the enormous cost' of Croatian EU accession to economically ruined EU (Bošnjak Interview 2011; Srb Interview 2011).

Furthermore, although the thesis found that transnational and bilateral relations, in most cases, did not prove to be a significant driver of party stances on the EU, as widely argued in the existing literature (Enyedi and Lewis 2006; Batory 2008a; Ladrech 2008), international party organisations can have some transformative role, as claimed by Haughton and Fisher (2008) and Pridham (2002). Party transformation induced by international affiliations may occur under two particular conditions, namely (i) when parties become susceptible to requirements of European transnational party federations and highly value tangible benefits from membership of these groups; and (ii) when European transnational parties decide strategically to spread influence on parties from the new regions of the European periphery by providing credible benefits in the form of associate membership status as well as an institutional framework for facilitating these parties' further 'European socialisation'. Transnational relations can therefore trigger the transformation of primarily strategically driven Eurosceptic parties that, in the process of

reorientation towards the pro-European pole, strive to avoid international isolation by joining European party federations. The key motive behind this was utilitarian – securing Western legitimacy and international respectability. Obtaining membership in European party federations would be final proof of their successful transformation and an indicator of a stable pro-European orientation. The cases of Serbia and Croatia thus suggest that national parties joined European parties primarily due to pragmatic and strategic reasons, while ideological closeness or loyalty to the core principles of European parties were of secondary importance. More importantly, since key members of European transnational parties were essentially ‘external veto players’ (i.e. influential officials of Western governments and the EU), by forging close relations with the European parties, former Eurosceptics effectively prevented these veto players from blocking their government participation.

Finally, the thesis found that distance from EU membership was a factor that framed party positions on Europe. In other words, it appears that a country’s level of integration with the EU and the intensity of these ties had an important transformative effect on some Eurosceptic parties in (potential) candidate countries. The thesis showed that the more advanced the EU integration process, the more pressures there were on parties to clearly position themselves on this issue and, in some (not all) cases, to become more pro-European. This tendency seems to be the result of two simultaneous processes. First, strong economic links with the EU gradually forged by consecutive pro-EU governments made these countries economically dependent on the EU and vulnerable to its demands. As a consequence, Eurosceptic politicians found it very difficult to ignore this fact and economically unviable to reverse the trend. Furthermore, as argued in Chapter 4, perceiving that EU integration was in the interests of parties’ supporters was an important driver of change, which was closely related to this tendency. Specifically, a more advanced level of EU integration changed parties’ perception of their supporters’ interests. In other words, trade links with the EU, which, over time, became practically irreversible led the leadership of Eurosceptic parties to start assessing them as economically important, beneficial and difficult to curtail, in spite of ideological scepticism and even hatred towards the West. Second, the mere scope of significant institutional changes and legal harmonisation introduced during the process of EU integration, even long before the commencement of EU membership negotiations, created a momentum that was difficult to reverse. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, Eurosceptic politicians realised that ‘97% of all investments comes from the EU’, that ‘so much has been done over the years’ and that ‘we would have

to change our whole system' and 'everything would be in vain' if the process is stopped (Nikolić 2012). As Grabbe (2006) noted in other Central and Eastern European countries, policy-makers became committed to the process because they had already invested considerable political capital into aligning with EU policies, so it became very expensive to withdraw.

This 'path dependence' therefore created strong incentives for parties to change and adapt to the 'new reality'. Both the traditionally Eurosceptic parties in Serbia did not 'withstand' it. They either adapted to new circumstances (the Socialist Party of Serbia) or experienced an intra-party split on this issue (the Serbian Radical Party) in 2008, by which time the country had built strong ties with the EU while the process of association with the EU, although quite slow, was relatively advanced. The same was the case with the Croatian Democratic Union in the early 2000s. Therefore, once that process become irreversible or had advanced considerably, parties found it difficult (unless they were ideologically firmly Eurosceptic) to 'resist' and thus 'adjusted to the structural changes in the world and the changed historical conditions in the country' (SPS 2010, p.47), no matter what the conditions for EU membership were. This argument is, however, different from the key assumptions of the EU conditionality literature, as outlined above. Whereas these authors (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Vachudova 2006, 2012; Subotić 2010) looked at the set of clear, tangible political and economic conditions that the EU imposes on candidate or member states and changes this may induce, this study argues that the EU did not directly aim to change the positions of Eurosceptic parties or to exercise a direct influence on party systems and individual parties. The observed 'path dependence' tendency thus was not the result of the EU's direct pressure on these parties to transform. Instead, it was the overall presence of the EU in these countries and the economic and institutional ties between the two sides that created the momentum and conditions conducive to the pro-EU transformation of pragmatic Eurosceptic politicians.

### **8.2.5 The importance of the post-Yugoslav context**

This study has argued that it is necessary to employ a case-sensitive approach when analysing party responses to Europe in different countries, given that the same explanatory factors may have varying significance and impact in different national settings. Almost all the factors examined in this thesis that proved to exert an effect on party positions on the EU were largely context-dependent. Specifically, the thesis found that the peculiar post-Yugoslav context significantly influenced Serbian and Croatian party responses to Europe

and created conditions that were rather unique and not replicable in other cases. In other words, the legacy of the post-Yugoslav wars, the nature of these countries' domestic political and party systems, political traditions, and their peculiar relations with the EU framed these parties' stances on European integration.

This was primarily visible in the nature of the EU integration debate that was, in both countries, centred on the specific issues stemming from the violent dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, rather than the EU and EU membership, respectively. Public debate on the EU has been essentially conducted through proxy issues, with the issue of Kosovo status being by far the most important one in Serbian party politics. Other proxy issues that characterised the EU debates across both countries were: cooperation with the ICTY, regional cooperation and attitudes towards the legacy and consequences of the post-Yugoslav wars. For example, the readiness to compromise on the Kosovo issues was mapped on to party stances on the EU and EU membership, with the most co-operative parties also being the most Euroenthusiastic and vice versa.

Despite all differences, most visible in the fact that Croatia became an EU member state in 2013, while Serbia had not yet started negotiating terms for its EU accession, both countries exhibited strikingly similar characteristics in relation to the most of the examined variables. What is most remarkable is that essentially the same pattern of transformation of once hard Eurosceptic parties occurred in both countries, driven by the same strategic factors, as discussed throughout the thesis. In addition, the reorientation of hard Eurosceptic parties, the transformation of party systems from polarised to moderate pluralistic (accompanied with a narrowing of ideological distance among relevant parties and more consensual nature of the EU membership debate), a sharp rise of public Euroscepticism and simultaneous decrease in support for Eurosceptic parties in Serbia in the late 2000s, followed the same or very similar pattern in Croatia from the early and mid-2000s.

Crucially, the nature of European issues and their translation into party politics in the context of these post-Yugoslav, post-communist and post-conflict societies was rather specific. As discussed in Chapter 3, the issues resulting from the violent breakup of the former Yugoslavia were closely intertwined with EU conditionality. The importance of national and identity issues related to EU integration, which was not the case in other Central and Eastern European countries (at least not to such an extent), led parties in both

countries to predominantly adopt ideologically driven stances on the EU. In other words, by taking identity-driven views on key prerequisites for European integration, which were crucial national issues, from the standpoint of their ideologies (i.e., the key values and principles they stand for), these parties predominantly formed attitudes towards the EU.

Moreover, while some authors (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002; Marks et al. 2006) found strong affinities in the West between the Left and GAL and between the Right and TAN, and in the East between the Left and TAN and between the Right and GAL, neither set of relationships characterised Serbian and Croatian party systems. This was due to the key characteristic of these party systems – i.e., the absolute dominance of a GAL-TAN axis centred around identity issues and traditional values – whereas an economic left-right dimension was largely irrelevant. This had consequences for party stances on the EU. Marks et al. (2006) found that in the West, sources of opposition and support for European integration spread across both dimensions of competition, while in the East, Right-GAL parties tend to support European integration and Left-TAN tend to be sceptical. However, in Serbia and Croatia, as a result of dominant social cleavages, there were no purely socio-economic leftist parties opposing Europe, so there was no ‘left’ opposition to the EU, while Euroscepticism was present exclusively among the radical right TAN parties. In other words, in Serbia and Croatia, socio-economic interests did not underpin party stances on the EU.

Another general consequence of Serbian and Croatian specificity is that some of the Western concepts of comparative politics employed in this study, such as party-family classification (Von Beyme 1985), ‘the cleavage theory of party responses to Europe’ (Marks and Wilson 2000), core-periphery and cadre party concepts (Katz and Mair 1995) have a limited explanatory power in the settings of these two party systems. This is particularly the case with the Serbian system, which was more unsettled, polarised and fragmented than the Croatian one, which made it rather difficult to differentiate the political core from periphery. This was the consequence of the lack of articulated interests of distinct social groups, which resulted in parties not representing or promoting such interests. Also, traditional social and political groupings based on classical political cleavages were distorted by growing nationalism and a war at the time these parties emerged, which significantly influenced their ideological profiles. It therefore made social democracy or conservatism rather specific and context-driven in these countries, and relatively different from the same

party families in Western Europe, although some convergence can be noticed since the late 2000s, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Finally, it appears that the position of the Democratic Party of Serbia on the EU and Serbian EU membership has been a rather unique, Serbian phenomenon. As discussed throughout the thesis, this identity-driven and essentially soft Eurosceptic party developed its stance in reaction to the post-Yugoslav developments (i.e., the unilateral proclamation of Kosovo's independence), adopting a policy of strong opposition to Serbian EU membership, following two decades of advocating Serbian EU accession (never too enthusiastically, though). The new stance and significant transformation were therefore triggered by a single, although rather fundamental, issue stemming from specifically Serbian circumstances. This party may be thus seen as a single-issue-driven Eurosceptic party, and it is likely that it would have maintained its support for Serbian EU membership if it had not encountered this issue.

### 8.3 Avenues for further research

This study found that, unlike governmental position, opposition status may be a powerful transformative factor in the case of office-seeking parties prone to strategic calculations when forming stances on the EU. It appears that there was consensus in the literature that being in government may moderate (rather than transform) Eurosceptic parties' policies and stances, although further research is needed to fully substantiate this claim (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2013). However, no current study systematically looks at opposition parties in this respect. There is, therefore, space for a comparative study of opposition parties across Europe that would build upon the findings of this thesis. Such study would bring more insight into how parties change stances and policies on Europe, given indications from this thesis that opposition status may be an important explanatory variable. More specifically, the questions to be addressed are as follows: What is the impact of losing elections on parties' views on the EU and how does long or repeated opposition status relate to party stances? Is the hypothesis that *losing elections and going into opposition acts an important driver of party transformation* valid across different party systems? To what extent can the theory of party change (Harmel and Janda 1994) be applied in the study of the transformation of party stances on Europe? How can changes in the proportion of votes – and, consequently, in ruling or opposition status – as 'external stimuli' help us to explain party reorientation? Furthermore, since the thesis found that opposition status may cause

substantial party transformation towards a pro-EU pole, further research of other party systems – and particularly former Eurosceptic parties that abandoned such policies in other countries when in opposition – is needed to substantiate this claim. In other words, was this was a consequence of specific condition pertaining to Serbian and Croatian party systems and their relations with the EU as candidate countries or was it an indicator of a more general tendency?

This thesis also found that some major, mostly strategically driven, parties in these countries formed – and, more importantly, shifted – attitudes irrespective of both public opinion and their core voters' stances on the EU. The comparative literature argued that the low salience of European issues may result in parties ignoring voters' preferences without compromising their electoral performance (Taggart and Szczerbak 2001, 2002). However, this study lacked precise data on the salience of EU issues and assumed that the EU was not an issue of an utmost priority for the core party voters, based on the generally high percentage of core voters that did not have any position or expressed a neutral stance on the EU (see Chapter 6). In other words, one could only speculate about this factor. Thus, further research, supported by more data on the preferences of electoral constituencies over a longer period of time, is needed. It should be specifically determined if it was indeed the low salience of the issue, or if other factors arising from the logic of domestic party competition (such as the lack of strong, coherent impulses from voters, since the EU was a 'difficult issue', as argued in this study) contributed to parties not being responsive to core voters' concerns. More generally, further research could approach the observed puzzle more comparatively, including more cases to address whether Serbian and Croatian parties are different from their European counterparts with respect to the fact that they largely ignored electoral constituencies when forming and changing stances on Europe. Moreover, given an apparently widespread perception in the comparative literature that public opinion is an important factor that shapes party stances on the EU (Konitzer 2011; Vachudova 2012) and the fact that this study argued against this, systematic analysis of the linkages between the transformation of individual party stances and public perceptions on the EU that includes more cases is needed to examine this properly.

This thesis also argued that the impact of financial lobby groups and tycoons on political parties (primarily through unofficial and murky channels of financing political parties) may be regarded as important for party responses to Europe. However, due to the sensitive nature of this issue and the limited available data, it was difficult to directly trace back party

positions to the apparently strong influence of organised economic interests. Therefore, further research to substantiate these claims is needed, both in the case of these two countries and other Central and Eastern European countries. In other words, are similar mechanisms at play in other unsettled, post-communist societies and party systems? This is an under-researched aspect of contemporary politics in Central and Eastern Europe, and further research into this relationship may allow us to better understand party responses to Europe in the region.

Chapter 6 hypothesised that big businesses in Serbia and Croatia were initially, at a time when they created monopolies, opponents of EU membership for their countries, since 'European consolidation' and the creation of systems with firm rules was not in their economic interests. Nevertheless, as this process advanced, they became proponents of joining the EU, given that their positions were strengthened and the initial process of their capital gaining was legitimised, while further economic expansion required the political stability and legal predictability that EU membership may bring. Similarly, although this study did not find compelling evidence that national churches affected parties' responses to European integration in any recognisable manner, this linkage may be important. Further research is justified in each of these areas, especially given the significant overall influence of big businesses as well as national churches in these societies. Additionally, significant segments of both Orthodox and Catholic churches have been vocally Eurosceptic since 2000, motivated by concerns for the national identities and traditional values that may be endangered by EU membership.

This thesis also found that the reorientation of formerly hard Eurosceptic and nationalist parties in both countries towards the pro-EU pole was reinforced (with some indications that it was even triggered) by these parties' intentions to obtain European legitimacy by becoming members of European transnational party federations. However, there are currently no studies that examine the dynamic patterns of the transnational relations of Serbian and Croatian parties, as discussed in Chapter 7. Moreover, there are presently few studies that systematically investigate the impact of transnational relations with European party federations (nor bilateral relations with other national parties) as a factor that may determine and change party attitudes towards the EU in these countries. Further and wider research of other cases is also needed in order to assess whether the pattern observed in this study was only a Serbian/Croatian phenomenon.



One of the findings of this thesis is that Western governments, represented by their ambassadors, appear to have possessed significant unofficial channels of influence on overall party stances, including those related to the EU. Specifically, there are strong, although limited, indications that these governments have played an important role in the transformation of former Eurosceptic parties in Serbia, as discussed in Chapter 7. However, this explanatory factor has been neglected in the existing comparative literature and there is room for further study of this variable. Specifically, future research is needed to examine the extent to which this is a phenomenon of the politically and institutionally unsettled post-communist and post-conflict countries. Is this a context-related finding due to a strong overall influence of the West in Serbia (and arguably other Western Balkan countries) since this is the source of most of these findings? Or it is the general context of (potential) candidate countries, which are subjected to considerable influences from the EU and the West? In other words, is the influence of these external actors something closely related to transition countries such as Serbia and potentially other Western Balkan nations, or is this the wider Central and Eastern European context?

Finally, although this study did not deal with party positions on Europe in EU member states, it is argued that debate about the European issue is substantially different in (potential) candidate states compared to fully-fledged member states. This was most visible in the lack of party attitudes towards the underlying principles of the EU or the project of European integration in candidate states, and instead an almost exclusive party focus on their countries' EU membership (primarily in Serbia), as discussed in Chapter 2. Further research could therefore investigate the nature of this difference and possibly come up with a concept or categorisation of party stances that would account for peculiar features of parties in countries that are not members, but are under the considerable influence of the EU.

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## Appendix 1: List of interviewees

### Serbia

#### Politicians:

Alimpić Zoran	Member of the presidency, Democratic Party	Belgrade, February 2011
Andrić Ivan,	MP and member of the presidency and political council, Liberal Democratic Party	Belgrade, April 2011
Čomić Gordana	Former vice president of the Serbian Parliament, MP and member of the presidency, Democratic Party	Belgrade, February 2011
Djukić Dejanović Slavica	Former president of the Serbian Parliament, MP and vice president, Socialist Party of Serbia	Kragujevac, January 2011
Djurić Marko	Foreign policy adviser to the Serbian president, member of the executive committee, Serbian Progressive Party	Belgrade, March 2011
Filipovski Dubravka	Vice president, MP and spokeswoman, New Serbia	Belgrade, March 2011
Gaćeša Nataša	International secretary, Socialist Party of Serbia	Belgrade, February 2011
Gamser Dušan	International secretary, Liberal Democratic Party	Belgrade, February 2011
Glišić Vladan	Member of the leadership, Dveri	Belgrade, April 2011
Grubješić Suzana	Former deputy Prime Minister for European integration, vice president and MP, G17 plus/United Regions of Serbia	Belgrade, April 2011
Jevtić Miloš	MP and former international secretary, Democratic Party	Belgrade, February 2011
Jovanović Miloš	Vice president, Democratic Party of Serbia	Belgrade, March 2011
Jović Damjan	Member of the executive committee, Serbian Progressive Party	Belgrade, March 2011
Lazić Nikola	International secretary, Democratic Party of Serbia	Belgrade, March 2011
Marić Jovan	Vice president, New Serbia	Belgrade, April 2011
Martinović Aleksandar	Former MP and deputy president of the parliamentary group, Serbian Radical Party	Belgrade, April 2011
Mirović Dejan	Author of the book 'Arguments against the EU', former MP, Serbian Radical Party	Belgrade, April 2011
Prokić Nenad	Former MP and member of the presidency, Liberal Democratic Party	Belgrade, April 2011



Samardžić Slobodan	Vice president and MP, Democratic Party of Serbia	Belgrade, March 2011
Vukomanović Dijana	Vice president, Socialist Party of Serbia	Belgrade, February 2011

### **Country experts:**

Bakić Jovo	Political sociologist, Faculty of Philosophy	Belgrade, April 2011
Cvijanović Željko	Political commentator and journalist	Belgrade, February 2011
Dereta Miljenko	President of NGO 'Civic initiatives'	Belgrade, May 2011
Orlović Slaviša	Political analyst, Faculty of Political Science	Belgrade, March 2011
Pešić Vesna	Former MP- Liberal Democratic Party, political analyst, one of the leaders of Serbian opposition in the 1990s	Belgrade, March 2011
Vuletić Vladimir	Political analyst, Faculty of Philosophy	Belgrade, March 2011

## **Croatia**

### **Politicians:**

Bošnjak Marjan	Vice president, Only Croatia	Zagreb, May 2011
Grubišić Boro	MP and member of the executive committee, Croatian Democratic Alliance of Slavonija and Baranja	Zagreb, May 2011
Kolman Igor	MP and spokesman, Croatian People's Party- Liberal Democrats	Zagreb, May 2011
Leaković Karolina	Former MP and international secretary, Social Democratic Party	Zagreb, May 2011
Lugarić Marija	MP and chairperson of the executive committee of the national group to the Inter-parliamentary union, Social Democratic Party	Zagreb, May 2011
Mondekar Daniel	MP and member of the EU integration committee and the joint parliamentary committee EU- Croatia	Zagreb, May 2011
Pejčinović Burić Marija	Former chair of the joint parliamentary committee EU-Croatia, former state secretary of the Croatian ministry of European integration, former MP, Croatian Democratic Union	Zagreb, May 2011
Petir Marijana	Former vice president and MP, Croatian Peasants' Party	Zagreb, May 2011
Srb Daniel	President and former MP, Croatian Party of Rights	Zagreb, May 2011
Škare Ožbolt Vesna	Former political adviser of Croatian president Tuđman, former minister of justice, vice president and former MP, Croatian Democratic Union/Democratic Centre	Zagreb, May 2011

Vrbat Tanja	MP and member of the EU integration committee, Social Democratic Party	Zagreb, May 2011
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**Country experts:**

Jović Dejan	Chief political adviser to Croatian president, University of Stirling and University of Zagreb	Zagreb, May 2011
Mladineo Mirjana	Political adviser to Croatian president for the EU and international organisations, former Croatian ambassador to the United Nations	Zagreb, May 2011
Raos Višeslav	Political analyst, Faculty of Political Science	Zagreb, May 2011

**Brussels**

Capezzuto David	Adviser responsible for non-EU member parties, International unit, Party of European Socialists	Brussels, July 2011
EC official (Anonymous)	Serbian Unit, DG Enlargement, European Commission	Brussels, July 2011
Frantz Joakim	Assistant political advisor responsible for Serbian parties, ELDR	Brussels, July 2011
Kacin Jelko	MEP, ELDR/Slovenia, European Parliament special rapporteur for Serbia, vice-chair of the EP Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo	Brussels, July 2011
Pack Doris	MEP, EPP/Germany, former chair of the EP Delegation for the South Eastern Europe, member of the EP Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo	Brussels, July 2011
Tanahatoc Daniel	Communication officer in charge of Croatian parties, ELDR	Brussels, July 2011
Vigenin Kristian	Minister of foreign affairs of Bulgaria, PES MEP, head of the PES Western Balkan task force	Brussels, July 2011

## Appendix 2: Interview questions (template)

### I- Party attitudes towards the EU/EU membership

1. What do you (your party) think about the EU as an international organisation?
2. What do you think about ideas underlying the process of European integration (such as the ceding or transfer of powers to supranational institutions such as the EU)?
3. Do you think that Serbia/Croatia should become a member of the EU and why?
4. What is your opinion on political and economic preconditions for Serbian/Croatian EU accession?

### II- Party ideology and identity

5. How would you characterise ideology of your party? What are the core values that constitute identity of your party?
6. Do you think that a state/government should play an active role in the economy?
7. What is your stance on traditional and family values and the role of church in a society?
8. Do you think that Serbian/Croatian national identity, culture and sovereignty could be endangered by the EU?

### III- Party strategy and tactics

9. Has your party changed attitudes towards the EU/EU membership since 2000? If so, why?
10. Did you formulate position on the EU due to electoral considerations? Do you think that adopting more favourable stance on the EU was aimed at attracting more voters and coming to power?
11. Did attitudes of other political parties towards the EU influence the position of your party on this issue?

### IV- Position within the party system

12. Did party's opposition/ruling position within the party system have an effect on party stances on the EU?

### V- Relations with electoral constituencies and socio-economic groups

13. Did preferences of core voters affect party stances and policies on the EU?
14. Do you think that EU membership is in the interest of party's core voters?
15. Did any socio-economic group (business group, non-governmental organisation, trade union or national church) influence or seek to influence party's position on the EU?

### VI- Transnational and bilateral party linkages

16. Do you maintain contacts with European transnational party federations, EU institutions and foreign ambassadors?
17. Did you have to change or adjust position on the EU as a result of international contacts or in order to obtain international affiliation?

### VII- Other questions

18. Do you think that Serbia should recognise the independence of Kosovo if that is a precondition for its EU accession?
19. Are there any internal conflicts within your party over the issue of Europe?
20. How important is the issue of European integration for your party?